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Sculpture in the Machine Age

ERIC GILL

(From an address delivered at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.)

THE business of Architectural Sculpture in the world today is no longer the natural flowering of the walls of buildings. Nor is it the production of objects depending for their value on what they signify. It is, on the one hand, a sort of cosmetic applied, like lipstick, to the walls of buildings — to add, as they say, "a human touch", or to add "enrichment", or to make "a focus point" where such seems to the architect to be needed; and, on the other, it is the business of producing museum curiosities — for things which are regarded by their makers simply from the point of view of aesthetics are obviously only curiosities, *objets d'art*, museum pieces — even if they are temporarily stuck on buildings. Therefore it seems necessary, if we are to arrive at some idea of normality, to make a critical survey of our world and discover, if we can, what the conditions of the sculptor's life actually are. We can no longer take things for granted — we can no longer take the thing called sculpture for granted. Sculpture is one of the things classified under the name of "art". We can no longer take art for granted. Art is one of the things men occupy themselves with. We can no longer take men for granted. For granted – I mean we can no longer assume that we know what we mean by the words "man", "art", "sculpture", the "world", still less can we assume that we all mean the same things by the same words. They call me a Sculptor, but I am not a Sculptor in the sense understood in art schools. I am not even an artist in the sense in which the world today uses the word. I am not primarily concerned with art in the sense in which critics understand it. "Art", as they understand it, is to me a queer and eccentric attempt to isolate aesthetic phenomena from all others.

For "art", as the critics use the word, has come to be that. It has come to be the business of producing things which have no meaning, but only aesthetic effect. "Art" in their sense is simply practical aesthetics. Intellectual significance, moral significance, utility – these things, according to them, have no concern for the artist – they are nothing to do with "art". Therefore "art", in their sense, becomes more and more idiosyncratic – more and more a revelation of the psychology of the artist – less and less a business of making things to order – and therefore no longer the business of making anything useful. For why? Because we have arranged things so that all the necessaries of life, the utilities, buildings, food, clothes, and furniture, are simply objects of merchandise, produced mechanically by people whose only interest in them is either the wages they are paid for working or the profits they derive from selling. In fact useful things are not made for use but for sale. And, on the other hand, things which we do not class as necessaries (paintings, sculptures, music and poetry), things which cannot be produced in the way of business by machine production – things which have to be produced one by one by persons working on their own responsibility – such things alone we call works of "art", and their makers, the artists, having no longer any concern with utility, "released", as they say, "from the necessity of making anything useful", are solely concerned with aesthetics – "formal relations", as the jargon has it, "plastic form", the "relations of masses" – and they are no longer interested in the use or meaning of anything.

It is true of course that the buyer, the consumer, is interested in the use of things. The workman's wife is interested in what she buys and so is the man of business when he turns consumer and buys things for himself – but, in the Factory and in the Office, neither the factory hand nor the man of business has any interest in the thing made except as a thing to sell. Work from the workman's point of view is what brings in wages. If it does not do so he will not do the work. Why should he? Like his master he is a man with something to sell, namely: his labour. And by means of Trade Unionism he seeks to get as high a price as possible for that commodity. And from the point of view of the man of business, things exist in order to bring in profits. If there are no profits he will try something else. He is not in business as he says "for his health" and, even if he were, what about the share-holders and the banks who have lent him money? They are not investing money from a sense of philanthropy. What are stockbrokers for?

So while, on the one hand, all necessary things are produced as merchandise, on the other hand, as man (whatever we think of him, and however we define him) does not live "by bread alone" but requires luxuries as well as necessaries, we have arranged things so that the producer of luxuries is more and more divorced from the business of useful production, more and more a hot-house plant, and his works more and more hot-house flowers. The necessaries and the luxuries have been cut asunder; the producer of necessaries is an entirely different kind of person from the producer of luxuries. The notion of work has been separated from the notion of art. The notion of the useful from the notion of the beautiful. The Artist, that is to say the responsible workman, has been separated from all other workmen. The Factory hand has no responsibility for what he produces; he has been reduced to a sub-human condition of intellectual irresponsibility. No workman is expected to be an "artist", and, on the other hand, no artist is expected to be a "workman". Industrialism has released the artist from the necessity of making anything useful, and it has released the workman from the necessity of making anything amusing. The Factory hand has no responsibility for the quality of what the machine turns out, he is not concerned to make any appeal to our sensibility. The luxury man, the Artist, has no concern with anything else. There is no possibility whatever by which factory products can be, or can claim to be, expressive of the individual personalities of factory hands. More and more therefore the work of the independent workman, the studio workman, the artist, is valued as being expressive of his individual personality, of his idiosyncrasy, his peculiar idiosyncrasy and nothing else. Peculiar and more and more peculiar, eccentric and more and more eccentric, Robinson Crusoe was no more isolated from the rest of the world than the modern artist is isolated from the ordinary life of his fellow men. He appeals to a smaller and smaller coterie of patrons who share his sensibility. In the end, his appeal is only to himself; he works to please himself and no one else. The factory workman is paid to submerge himself in the machine, to be himself a machine, a sentient part of the machinery. The artist is paid to exalt himself on a pedestal, to thank God he is not as other workmen are, to expose his soul naked. The Artist is all soul, the workman has no soul at all.

I mean the workman, as such, has no soul. In his spare time, in the time when he is not working, in the time when he is no longer a worker, then of course he has a soul like his master's – almost like the soul of an artist! Then he requires amusement. Then he requires culture. Then he requires luxury. Then of course there is the wireless, and lectures on Science and Religion. Then of course there are picture galleries and museums where they house the peculiar works of the peculiar people called artists. And, on the other hand, the Artist as such has no body. In his spare time, in the time when he is not working, in the time when he is not an "artist", then of course he has a body, almost like his patron's, almost like a workman's. Then he requires the necessaries of life – the things produced in factories by machinery. He requires a drink – "Guinness is Good for you", "I prefer a Bass", or, as a matter of fact, a Worthington. He requires a loaf of bread – grown in Canada, ground in Liverpool, baked by the hundred in gas ovens. He requires clothes – he used to dress "like an artist", now he must dress like a respectable bank clerk, and must buy ready-made suits of clothes. He must go to the Fifty Shilling tailor, unless he is unusually successful, unless, that is, his agent, the picture gallery man, has succeeded in making a vogue for him and so getting high prices for his peculiar works – then, of course, he can have his clothes made by an old-fashioned tailor – if he thinks it worth while to have machine-made fabrics cut and sewn by hand. Otherwise he will have his clothes "ready made" – ready made; that is to say made ready for dummies, tailors' dummies; for if you make suits by the thousand you can only make them to fit an ideal man, a cave man with square shoulders like a "tee" square. He requires houses and furniture. Being an Artist, of course he doesn't want any sham art, he doesn't want any imitation Jacobethan Bungalows such as delight the men of business and their employees, the factory hands. He doesn't want any longer the imitation Greek or Roman of Edinburgh or Bath. He prefers well-ventilated Flats with lifts and sound sanitation and he prefers steel furniture and no "art nonsense". He will leave "art nonsense" to the men of business, whose business it is, and to their unfortunate millions of employees.

For, as neither the Employer nor the Employee is concerned with anything else but selling things, and have, between them, developed a system of manufacture which deprives everyone but a few designers of any concern for the quality of what is turned out ("Will it sell?" that is the only question), so neither Employer nor Employee can develop any faculty of criticism and both are completely satisfied by any kind of "art nonsense". And as the majority of those who buy things are themselves either men of business or employees in the shops, offices, and factories of men of business, so the buyer is equally untrained to criticize things and is tossed to and fro by this fashion and that – from one "art nonsense" to another – and hopes for more and more leisure in which to develop "culture". But whereas the workman desires as much leisure as possible, the Artist desires more work and very little leisure; for the artist can think of nothing better to do than his work and the workman can think of nothing better to do than doing nothing. In fact a workman's ideal life is the life of a gentleman living on shareholders' dividends.

But do not misunderstand me – I do not mean that any man likes idleness. I mean simply that no man regards the irresponsible labour of a factory hand as a thing in itself worth doing. If all our factory hands were to receive handsome legacies from benevolent aunts, very few of them would go back to their factories. But if all our painters and sculptors, musicians and poets and architects were to receive legacies from their aunts very few of them would vacate their studios. That's the difference. The work which people want is responsible labour – labour for which they are responsible. Men don't go into factories because they like factory work but because they are in need of money to buy things with. How many people would go into factories as ordinary hands if they had any other way of earning a living?

You may say this is an untrue description of things. You may say that things are not like that, that the difference between artists and factory hands is not so complete, that the artist is not yet entirely released from the necessity to make anything useful, that the workman, the factory hand, is not yet entirely released from responsibiliy. It is true; but then nothing ever is quite complete or perfect. We say for example that Roman Society was divided into Freemen and Slaves. There was a division as complete as one might wish to see. But, even so, the freeman was not entirely free from duties towards his slaves and the slave was not entirely without rights against his master. The freeman in fact was very much bound and the slave, in the absence of machinery, was a very responsible workman. Nevertheless it remains true to say that Roman Society consisted of Freemen and Slaves and that that state of affairs coloured all their society, so that the institution of slavery was the "mark" of antiquity.

So today industrialism is the "mark" of our society and industrialism makes the division I have described. It makes, and, as it perfects itself, as men perfect it, it will make a still harder and sharper division between work and leisure, between the necessary and the amusing, between the "workman" and the "artist" – between what we call useful and what we call "art". The division is not yet complete. The dregs of the pre-Industrial world are still apparent. Not yet are all cows milked or all bricks laid by machinery, not yet are all machines minded by machines (most machines still need human beings to mind them); but these things will pass – these *dregs.*

Some time ago I was shown over the Oxford University Press. The O.U.P. is a very big commercial enterprise, it is a great factory, a book factory – machine type composition, machine printing, machine binding – marvelous and intricate machines. The machines, as an Army general might have said, were "splendid". But what were not splendid, what was really appalling, was the number of people employed, people, human beings. It seemed absurd, it seemed mad (and what is mad is terrifying), hundreds of young men and young women, doing the most ridiculous repetition operations, operations mechanical in their nature, operations which with a little ingenuity machines could be invented to do and do better – better, that is to say more quickly and more cheaply. And machines do not involve their owners in the necessity of observing Trade Union regulations. A machine does not require a welfare worker, it does not want time off to have tea. Machines are not jealous of one another, and they never send deputations to dispute about wages to the Master Printers Federation. So, at the O.U.P., the men, not the machines, were appalling, the men and the women. Could they not, we asked, invent machines to do jobs like those? It seemed as though all the complicated jobs were done by machinery and only the small routine jobs left to the human beings. It seemed all wrong. It wasn't that there were too many machines in the place, but too many men and women. The machines "were splendid" – but the men and women were mean, ignoble, and futile. But, they told us, things were getting better. They told us that, during the last eight years, though the output of printing has been greatly increased, they have reduced the actual number of employees by over 300. Eight years ago they employed 300 more hands than they do today.

That is the way the thing must and should go. You cannot have a Motor-Car and drive at walking pace — all the time. And you cannot have machinery and not get rid of human labour. That is to say you must get rid of human labour for the *doing* of the work. You will still need human beings to design things and to design machinery and control it. Also you will need human beings to organize and control production and distribution. And, most important, you will need human beings to buy things! After all, as Ruskin pointed out long ago, the end of production is consumption. If you've got no consumers it's no use producing. At any rate you will still need designers — and at the O.U.P. they have a room called the "layout room" where there is a man in charge and four lady assistants. In that room all the printing done at the O.U.P. is designed, measured, laid out. Nothing is left to the printers, the machine-minders, to design. That is not their job. How could it be? And the business of printing books is typical of all other trades. More and more, machinery is replacing human labour in the business of building. More and more, the building operative is becoming a minder of machines and responsible for nothing else. The only responsible workmen left are the architect and his assistants in the office and the contractor and his foremen on the job.

But, it naturally follows, it follows inevitably that the more we use machinery in production the less reason there is for those ornamental fal-lals which were the product of the exuberance of the workmen in the old days of hand work. When you do things by hand, in your own small workshop, for your own personal customers, your works cannot fail to be to some extent an expression of your personality. But too much "fancy business" is a nuisance; it is a good thing therefore that exuberance has limits imposed upon it naturally. For one thing: it takes time and therefore there are limits to your customers' willingness to pay for it. For another: men are normally shy and dislike showing off. (Among human beings it is the women who are now the Peacocks – though whether the finery, either of women or birds, is designed to attract their mates or to affright their enemies has not been certainly determined.) So there was not normally any need to worry about the over-doing of self-expression. There were bad periods, periods of silliness, flamboyant periods, grandiose periods, over-ornate periods (for example Henry VII's Chapel at Westminster), but these periods were as much the fault of the customer as of the workmen. The prosperous merchant likes a lot of ornament for his money. The prosperous merchant is not famous for refinement of taste.

The only thing that has ever curbed the ostentation of the prosperous merchant is the religion of Puritanism. Man has always been liable to fall into Puritanism; for Man is a bit of a rabbit and is frightened of his own lusts. Then he "gets the wind up" and runs to the other extreme. Moreover, though they hardly ever saw it clearly and seldom stated it, you cannot make money if you squander your profits in riotous living. Therefore a religion which forbade riotous living was a good religion for money-makers. And as you could not make money and live riotously so it came to be supposed that, as righteousness was the best way to make money, so getting rich was the mark of righteousness. ("I have never seen the good man begging bread"– that was their scriptural warrant.) So the religion of Puritanism curbed the pride of merchants and they broke all the Church Furniture and images. And what Puritanism did not destroy has been made absurd by industrialism. Machine-made ornament is absurd. It is not only absurd in the nature of things, for machines are incapable of being exuberant, it is absurd in mere fact. It looks absurd, it looks silly. It is as absurd as a Prayer-Wheel.

So by about the year 1850 even merchants had become dissatisfied. Then we had the Great Exhibition, then we had the South Kensington Museum, then we had the Art Schools – and all these things because industrialism, factory production, machine production, was getting a bad name among the more enlightened consumers, and foreign competition was beginning. The business of design had passed out of the hands of the workmen, the factory hands, and, in the minds of the masters, the business of designing was nothing more than making machine reproductions of what had formerly been done by hand – not good reproductions but reproductions more and more degraded as quantitative production was perfected.

For from the point of view of the Masters the sole business of designing is designing what will sell. This is quite natural and inevitable. For all their talk about the "White Man's Burden" and the duty of spreading British culture is hypocrisy. (More or less conscious hypocrisy, or shall we call it camouflage or window-dressing or simply eye-wash?) The Balance Sheet is the real determining factor. For the more you introduce machinery, the more money you have to borrow and the more money you have to borrow the more you get into the hands of the money-lenders, that is to say investors and banks whose only interest in your business is your balance sheet. The worker, the factory hand, had been deprived of his responsibility as a designer, the only interest of the factory owner is profits; he is not paid to do designing.

So they set up Art Schools – to train designers. Then they set up the museums in order that the designers might study in them and apply the result of their study, after passing examinations, to the business of factory production. But directly they said the word "art" they found themselves entangled in all the paraphernalia of the studios. By the year 1850 the art of the studios had become completely cut off from the work done in work-shops. The idea of "art" had been divorced from the idea of making *things*. It had come to mean simply the business of making *pictures* of things. So the word "art" was inextricably entangled with idea of pictorial – "Art"! That means models and portraits and landscape paintings. And these ideas were very difficult to harmonize with the needs of British factory owners; and the art schools have, in consequence, always been torn between the idea of art as the business of "holding a mirror up to nature" and the idea of art as the business of making plain things ornamental. The life class in one room, textile design and wallpapers in another. Still-life and the "antique" in one place, bookbinding and printing and "art metal work" somewhere else. And to crown all, and to make sure that the tax-payers' money isn't being wasted, a grand system of art examinations and a crowd of harassed art masters spending a large part of their time filling up attendance forms and, like a Parish Priest, scrutinizing birth certificates to make sure that applicants for the "life class" are respectable persons and applicants for the trade classes are not infringing the rules of trade unions.

In spite of these entanglements with studio art, the first business of the art schools was the study of ornament, historic ornament, and examinations in the "history of ornament". But the first business of industrialism is to make things by machinery, and machines cannot do ornament – even ornament designed by people trained in art schools. All the best people refused to have it, plain things became fashionable. So by the year 1890 after forty years of art schools the word "artistic" came to mean plain. Plain serge was called "art" serge, plain walls were called "artistic". To reject the product of the South Kensington art schools, was the only way to avoid "art nonsense". It became clear that under industrial conditions of production only plain things could be called good things. I say it became clear, but it did not become clear to everyone. It is not clear to everyone even now. And it did not become clear to men of business. Men of business still think of art with a big "A" as being the more or less faithful and sentimental imitation of nature – life study and models, portrait paintings and landscape paintings. And they still think of art with a small "a" as being the addition of an ornamental quality to things which would otherwise be plain and therefore, in their opinion, ugly.

You can sell Art with a big "A" by itself. It is "art"; you cannot get away from that!* – the things you put in museums (picture galleries and drawing room walls and mantle shelves are a kind of museum).

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* As Charlie said in "Major Barbara".

And art with a small "a" is not saleable by itself, but is a thing you apply to give a saleable quality to things otherwise unsaleable.

Under the stress of the breakdown of finance which we are now witnessing and groaning under, an even greater effort is being made to bring "art" and "industry" together. Even the Royal Academy and the Prince of Wales are ready to help. There is a great exhibition of British Industrial Art actually being held in the temple of the portrait and landscape painters. The British Institute of Industrial Art, one of the instigators of this movement, said in one of its first manifestos "Never in the course of our rough island story", or words to that effect, "has it been more necessary that it is now to swell the volume of foreign trade. To that end it is necessary that artists should collaborate with factory owners so that the saleable quality of British goods may be increased and foreign competition overcome". That is what they said. And it is not new – it has all been said before. In an article in the *Art Union* of 1845[*] referring to a similar exhibition held in the Opera House, Covent Garden, the writer speaks of "the importance of Design in enhancing the mercantile value of our staple commodities" and concludes thus:

> The soothing influences of Art, superadded to the usefulness of manufactured products, will give force and efficiency to those lessons of civilization which it is the proud destiny of Britain to preach to the whole human race. . . .

All things are merchandise – all things are made to sell. Art is a means for the breaking down of "sales

[*] See letter from Basil S. Long in the *Times* for January 8, 1935.

resistance". Honesty was the best policy – the most successful graft. The foundation of the Empire. But honesty, like patriotism, is not enough. Honesty must be supplemented by Art. Art is good salesmanship. They cannot see, hardly anyone can see that in a world in which everything is merchandise and all things are made to sell you cannot make things beautiful on purpose, still less can you make them beautiful in order to sell them. You can only make things useful; for the useful is, in reality, the only thing which is for sale.

I say the useful alone is for sale. For ultimately all sales are exchanges of things for things, or services for services. (That is why usury is offensive to rational beings! Because it is an exchange of something for nothing.) And all just sales are exchanges of equivalents. You cannot justly exchange a fourpenny loaf for a sixpenny pencil – if the prices are accurate. And just as you cannot shoot the square root of 2 with a gun so you cannot sell beauty, goodness, or truth – because you cannot name their equivalents. You cannot have twopennyworth of Love or a bob's worth of Beauty. You cannot be good for money, or put Truth up to auction. You can only sell things on account of their utility. There is a beauty in useful things, but it is not the beauty which is done for love. It is the beauty of functionalism.

There are only two alternatives – either you can scrap the industrial system – that is to say abandon machine industry – or you must be reconciled to a world of plain things – that is to say abandon your pre-industrial notions of beauty. And no one wants to do either. The new-found benefits of industrialism are too attractive. Plenty seems better than poverty even if it is plenty of rubbish, and man's love of ornament is too deep rooted. But of course plainness is more imperative in some trades than in others. In the interiors of houses the need for plainness is less pressing than on the outsides. If you do not like the pictures or ornaments in your friends' houses you need not visit your friends. But in the streets and public places, no one can have the right, still less the duty, of exhibiting in public what the public does not like – or what is demonstrably foolish. Ornamental things produced by industrialism are foolish.

You *know* it would be foolish to have motor car bonnets made of copper repoussé to a standardized pattern, or even made by hand or by an "artist-craftsman". You *know* it would be foolish to have arts-and-crafts wrought ironwork on the Forth Bridge. You *know* the Tower Bridge is a foolish erection, and that the people who put it up were foolish to imagine that the proximity of the Tower of London imposed on them the necessity of covering iron girders with an imitation Gothic veneer. You *know* it is a good thing that machine-made Lace Curtains have gone right out of fashion. You *know* it is a good thing that people are beginning to realize that sound construction is more desirable than carving on machine-made Dining Room Furniture.

Then why don't people see that Architectural Sculpture is absurd on machine-made buildings? Part of the reason is that people do not realize that buildings are not built by the Architect in an office but are built by the men on the job. They think of the designer in his office, and they think he has a perfect right to say he will have a bit of carving just here or a bit of carved moulding just there. There is a whole literature on the right use of mouldings – how Gothic mouldings give such and such an effect and Classic mouldings give another effect, and so on. They talk about good manners in Architecture! It is all a sort of genteel play-acting. No reference is ever made to the men who do the work. It has long ceased to be anything to do with *them*.

In the early days of industrialism this did not matter so much. Drawing paper was expensive and could only be bought in small sheets – you could not possibly draw out everything full size. You had to rely on the intelligence and sensibility of the actual workman! There were no machines as we understand the word. If anything had to be done, some man had to do it. Thus up to the end of the eighteenth century there was no difference in kind between the work of the bricklayers and masons and that of the sculptor. A hand-made brick is the same kind of thing as a hand-made sculpture. A brick-maker like all other workmen was potentially an Artist and every Artist was potentially a poet. The Artist was not a special kind of man but every man was a special kind of artist.*

But now it is radically, absolutely different. The building gang is no longer a gang of responsible craftsmen working under the direction of the Architect. The building gang today is a gang of irresponsible "hands". It is only composed of men because they have not yet succeeded in inventing machines to do all the work instead of men. The hands are not responsible craftsmen – there are very few responsible craftsmen left because very few are required. Therefore the addition of hand-made carving to buildings made by machinery or made by human machines is quite a different thing from the addition of architectural sculpture to buildings made by real men. Modern sculpture does not "go" with modern buildings. It does not go with it – not because it is bad sculpture or badly designed, but because it is the wrong kind of thing. There is no place for architectural sculpture on machine-made buildings because architectural sculpture is a part of the building, a flowering of the stones, and machine-made stones cannot flower.

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* *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, by A. K. Coomaraswamy.

But "architectural" sculpture is not the only kind of sculpture nor is it the only kind connected with buildings. There is one place, or one kind of place, for sculpture on buildings today and that is the place, wherever that place may reasonably be, in which it is reasonable to put a sculptured or carved panel to show the passer-by what building it is that he is looking at. This kind of sculpture might be called Heraldic Sculpture or as I should prefer "furniture" sculpture; that is to say it is sculpture regarded as part of the reasonable furnishing of a building. Such sculptures must be done by hand, they must be done by a responsible workman, they must be done by an Artist, because machinery cannot reasonably or economically make a single object – it is absurd to make an elaborate machine to make hats if you only want one hat for yourself. For instance, the office of the Sun Insurance Co. needs an image of the Sun over its door, but it does not need a thousand. Or the Prudential Assurance Society needs an image of Prudence but not twenty images. And a Catholic Church needs a Crucifix — and needs it more than ever — but not fifty crucifixes.

You can call this kind of sculpture what you like so long as you do not call it "architectural" sculpture. It is not architectural sculpture because its reason for existence is not architectural; it is not done to adorn the building. It is not done to please the architect. It is not a flowering of the building stones. Its reason for existence is the need of those who *use* the building. It is wanted by the *owner* of the building; whether the Architect wants it or not. (I know of a Catholic Church where they wanted a set of the Stations of the Cross but the Architect did not want them, he said they would spoil his building. And as he was a friend of the lady who had given most of the money, they waited until he was dead — *then they put them up*. . . .)

But the modern architect, the architect who is modern in the sense that he is alive to the conditions of modern building, the nature of modern building materials and the nature of modern building operatives and modern building operations — the modern architect does not want architectural sculpture at all. He knows it cannot be done. It cannot be done by building operatives who have not got it in them. And so if he needs sculpture at all, furniture sculpture, he calls a workman in from an entirely different world — the world of the studio — and he calls in a different kind of workman — a gentleman — a person whose mind is filled with the enthusiasms of the studio — aesthetic problems — problems of the relations of masses. . . . "Sculpture", says a leading exponent of the art, "*is* the relations of the masses." Sculpture, they say, is that kind of composition in three dimensions such that it produces a psychological reaction in the holder by reason, not of its use or its intelligible meaning, but simply by reason of its three-dimensional shape. Mass, Rhythm, Line – all sculpture must have these things, but for the modern studio sculptor, sculpture is nothing else, or nothing else worth mentioning. They talk about "being above" considerations of mere meaning. They talk about "pure art".

And the modern sculptor, like the modern architect, is called "modern" because he is a true product of the present time. At the present time the notion of art is divorced from the notion of utility. The notion of work is divorced from the notion of responsibility. The artist is "released from the responsibility for making anything *useful*". The workman is released from the *responsibility* for making anything at all.

So the Artist does not make anything useful; and if the architect wants, or if his client wants, an image of the Sun to go over an insurance-office door, or an image of St. James or any other such person to go over the door of a church, the architect's position is a difficult one. The workman, the irresponsible factory hand, cannot produce it, and the Artist does not want to. He says it does not interest him. He says it is not "art". And the workman cannot produce it because he has become a mere tool, a tool without any mind behind it, a tool in the hands of his master, a tool reduced to an abject dependence upon exact instructions and measurements. The workman can only follow his patterns and obey orders.

But in between the modern workman and the modern artist there is the person who is neither one nor the other. The person who is neither a member of the ordinary building gang nor a "real artist" in the modern sense of the word. He is called the "artist-craftsman". He is neither a trade-unionist nor a free-lance. He enjoys neither the advantages of being an ordinary workman nor those of an eccentric personality, and he suffers from his isolation. But he is in fact more eccentric than anyone else – for though he lives in the modern world, gets his food, clothing, and shelter from the only available sources, goes by train like anyone else, uses the telephone, eats "Grape Nuts" and drinks machine-made beer, wears clerk's clothes (the same as kings and factory hands) and lives in more or less jerry-built houses (the only kind he can get), though he lives in the modern world, he does not enjoy its advantages. He is neither released from the business of making anything useful, nor is he released from responsibility. He does not fit in. He cannot throw himself on the mercy of his fellow countrymen when he is out of work – that is, "go on the dole". Neither can he claim the support of the "intellectuals" as being one of the "fine flowers" released, dissolved out by industrialism. Nevertheless, he represents the normal man, the normal workman, that is what is so eccentric about him. And he suffers from his eccentricity, for though he represents the normal workman, his work is not normal. It is too self-conscious. It doesn't go with machine-made things, and yet it is not suitable for the museum.

But in spite of this difficulty the artist-craftsman is the only person whom the architect can reasonably employ when he wishes, or when his client wishes, to have furniture sculpture on his building. For though hand-made sculpture does not really go with the machine-made building, that cannot be helped. It has a right to be there because it is useful. And it is all the better when the sculptor, the "furniture sculptor", pays more attention to the usefulness, the meaning, the significance, of his sculpture than when he bothers about aesthetic questions, questions of style, questions of beauty, questions of formal relations, and low-down things such as matters of anatomical accuracy.

If we consider the sculpture of today (the furniture sculpture) and especially that which we call bad, we must conclude that its badness is not due to the sculptor having given too much consideration to questions of meaning and significance, but on the contrary because he has given too much consideration to beauty and not enough to questions of meaning. Whether we look at the products of the ordinary church furniture shop on the one hand, or the sculpture on Banks and Town Halls, it is the same trouble. Questions of style, human anatomy, and all such art-school questions have been uppermost in the sculptor's mind and such works have generally no intelligible meaning. Look at the ordinary church Madonna. The last thing the sculptor thinks about is the theological significance of the work. The theological significance is reduced to its lowest terms (Mother and Child). The theological significance of the image – Mother of God, Son of God, the Incarnation – is entirely forgotten. Nor does the person who buys the statue consider such things. Is it pretty? Is it Gothic? Such are the questions which decide the matter. It is obvious that statues in churches are generally bought because they are beautiful, that is to say because they arouse in the beholder an aesthetic emotion, and not because they are precise presentations of the truth of religion. And it is the same with the sculpture of street buildings. Look for instance at the sculptures over the doorway of Australia House in the Strand. Is there any intelligible meaning in them? If there is, it is the least important thing about them. What they chiefly reflect is the sculptor's and the architect's and the owners' of the buildings ideas as to what is beautiful and pleasant and pretty to see.

A few years ago I was asked by a certain parish priest to advise him about the building of a new parish church. So I went to see him. I said: What is a church? First of all, I said, a church is to be thought of as a canopy over an altar — that is the primary bedrock idea in the word church — or isn't it? (I mean a church, not a meeting house.) Then having covered your altar, you must cover your ministers and, because all the people who attend are assistant ministers, you must then cover your congregation. And as all the people are ministers they must all equally be present — therefore they must all be able to see and hear. Therefore the best kind of building is obviously a circular one or one with an open circular central space with the altar in the middle. And I went on like that for half an hour or so — developing the idea of a church in all its functions. At the end of my lecture the parish priest said: "But I was thinking of a red brick church with white stone traceries. . . . Something which would be a credit to the town. . . ."

In fact we are not suffering from too little attention to beauty but too little attention to intelligible meaning. And if sculptors and their customers would give a great deal more attention to the real meaning of their works, or rather the real meaning which their works should have if they are to fulfill the purpose for which they are intended by those who pay for them, and if they would give less attention to and talk less about questions of aesthetics (except in the strict secrecy of their studios), we should certainly have sculptures which would be better in themselves and which would also go better with the functional beauty of machine-made buildings.

In all this, of course, I have been speaking only of "furniture" sculpture. "Studio sculpture" strictly so called only concerns me as an outsider, an amateur. And in any case there is no need for me to talk about it, first, because my subject is sculpture on buildings and second, because it is chiefly a subject for experts (for art critics and museum keepers). And I do not propose to speak about aesthetics, not because they are unimportant but because it seems to me they are not of the *first* importance. They are not to me of the first importance because to me, as to a maker of chairs and tables, the work in hand is first of all the production of something useful, something that means something.

Of course it is possible to make objects which have no significance but aesthetic significance, just as it is possible to make objects which have no significance but utility. In the first case there is "studio art", pure and simple, whose home is ultimately the museum (though of course everyone can have a little museum at home). In the second case there are such things as drain pipes and telegraph wires which nobody regards as things to be looked at and so they are frequently buried out of sight. But, normally, things made by men for men are neither purely aesthetic nor purely useful. The beautiful is not unmixed with utility. The useful is not unmixed with the beautiful. It is scarcely possible, when things are made by responsible workmen, that is to say by human beings, that they will not have the quality of beauty as well as the quality of usefulness. If today it seems otherwise it is because we have deprived the ordinary workman of all responsibility, and have deprived the artist of all concern for service. Normally, aesthetics cannot be cut out in practice. The housewife cannot help arranging the furniture so that it looks nice. And the maker of chairs cannot help shaping his wood so that it looks nice (but his customers will not buy his chairs if they cannot sit on them or if they are uncomfortable). And suppose a sculptor making a Crucifix were to bend the whole weight of his intelligence to the discovery of what a Crucifix really signifies — even so he cannot help considering the Masses and Rhythms of his stones or wood. But there is no need to talk about it, except in the studio — and in secret.

What is wanted then, most of all, is that we should all "take the pledge" and give up talking about art and beauty — give it up entirely — in public. Just as in architecture the whole business of Styles and Orders, Gothic and Classic has now, among intelligent practitioners, all gone into the rubbish heap and the waste-paper basket, and your modern architect realizes that his first business is to apply his intelligence to the discovery of what the building has really got to do, knowing that he is not thereby prevented from giving due attention (and no need to talk about it) to "the relations of masses" (and thus buildings have become more beautiful as well as more useful, and more beautiful *because* they are more useful), so in sculpture (furniture sculpture) we should throw away all notions of working in this "style" or that, archaic or modern, mediaeval or classical and confine our conscious attention to the discovery of what each particular thing signifies. Style will still be there (it cannot be avoided), it will be the style which is derived from the kind of people, the kind of human beings we are, the way we think about things and what we think about them.

Perhaps this whole industrialism in which we have landed ourselves will collapse. If we solve the problem of industrialism then the situation will be as it is today, only without its misery. We shall still have the divorce between the ordinary building operative, the human tool, and the peculiar person in the studio, and we shall still have the need of the Artist-Craftsman to do "furniture sculpture". But if industrialism is wrecked, then, though there will be a period of frightful chaos and misery, we shall inevitably return in the end to the primitive and normal human state in which there is no divorce between artists and workmen, in which all useful things are works of art, and in which art and aesthetics are the only things no one ever talks about.

Meanwhile the situation is clear. It is no longer possible for architects to put up buildings according to their personal aesthetic predilections. It is no longer possible for clients (the people who want the buildings) to order from the architect buildings in this style or that because they happen to think Gothic is uplifting and spiritual, or that Classical is dignified and sedate. It is no longer possible, because buildings are not built in the architect's office and they are not in any real sense any longer built by men. They are built generally by machinery and frequently of artificial materials; they are therefore radically different in kind from buildings built by human beings.

For machines are not simply tools which you can use like a chisel to make what you like. The man who minds the machine does not make what he likes but simply and solely what the machine has been designed to make (the machine-minder, however skilful, is simply a part of the machinery and in the accounts labour is simply a "cost" like raw materials and bank charges). And on building operations wherein men have been turned into mechanical appliances, you can only do what is in accordance with the nature of mechanical appliances.

The conditions of building have always been of paramount importance in architecture. They are not more so today than they were in the past. But though building conditions are not more intrinsically important today than they ever were, they are more urgently in need of recognition because we have got entangled in a set of false notions. We don't proceed as they did, for example, in the tenth century and as they do today in the engineering trades. In the tenth century building was a kind of engineering – engineering in stone. They were enthusiastic about building, just as we are about aeroplanes. And no one dreamed of building in any style but the very latest – just as no engineer today would dream of building a replica of the Clifton Suspension Bridge or a replica of Bleriot's monoplane. But our architects have got it into their heads that building houses and churches and town halls isn't like that. They don't think of themselves as builders. They don't think of themselves as directors of building operations. They are solely concerned with the *appearances* of buildings. As with my parish priest, their first concern is that the outsides of their buildings shall impress the passer-by. In this connection it is pleasant to be able to quote the words of a much more respectable authority than myself. Lord Palmerston, writing in 1860 to Lord Panmure, about the building of Netley Military Hospital, said:*

> It seems to me that . . . all consideration of what would best tend to the comfort and recovery of the patients has been sacrificed to the vanity of the architect, whose sole object has been to make a building which should cut a dash when looked at from the Southampton River.

And as it is absurd to imitate the Gothic or Classical styles in buildings built in the twentieth century (as absurd as it is to have printed books done in the style of mediaeval manuscripts, or as it is for men to dress in machine-made and degraded imitations of eighteenth-century tailoring), and as it is absurd to put up buildings to suit the whims of architects and their clients without regard to the use and function of buildings or the nature of building construction and materials or of modern building conditions, so it is absurd to order carvings and enrichments simply because you think you would like them.

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* See L. Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*, p. 155 seq.

It is all very well to say that the appetite for ornament is human and cannot be rooted out. It is just as true to say that the appetite for responsibility is human and cannot be eradicated. Both these things are true and they are interdependent. Ornament is only reasonable and only endurable when it is the product of responsible workmen (workmen who are responsible not only for their work but responsible also to their customers). By our system of industrialism we have almost entirely rooted out the idea of responsibility – and we have rooted out the *fact* of responsibility from the ordinary workman. And as we have elected to do without responsibility we must make up our minds to do without ornament.

This is where the critics ought to help, and not hinder. The function of the critic is to lead public opinion and, as man is before all else a rational creature, the function of the critic is before all else to lead public opinion in a rational direction. Let us grant that a city made of strictly functional buildings with only a few pieces of "furniture sculpture" over the doorways and suchlike places, though it might be a very beautiful city, would not satisfy the human yearning for the ornamental. Let us grant it. But there are other yearnings besides the yearning for ornament and, while we leave the masses of human beings in a sub-human condition of intellectual irresponsibility, the yearning for mere ornament is comparatively unimportant. It is straining at the gnat after having swallowed the camel.

The Cathartic Principle

JOHN CROWE RANSOM

*The Poet as Citizen,** which consists of miscellaneous lectures delivered at Cambridge University, must be number sixty-something among Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's published works. It displays the best qualities of a dialectic that flourishes in the Senior Common Rooms and even the Junior Common Rooms of Oxford and Cambridge but has never quite borne the translation to our own seats of learning without suffering a sea-change, in the course of which most of its grace and resiliency has disappeared. There they make it an art to wear their learning lightly, and to employ the informal and allusive style. Sir Arthur cites with relish John Henry Newman's reference to a dialectician who was obstreperous at Oxford: "He was deficient in depth, and besides, coming from a distance, he had never really grown into an Oxford man." Deficient in depth may come to mean, I can imagine, deficient in elevation, that is, not up to a certain High Table or All Fellows style, which is local, exclusive, and delightful. Sir Arthur has the Cambridge air, which is the same thing as the Oxford air. The late George Saintsbury had an air, but it was just the generic British-university air; it was playful but subdued by the sense of important business, and by the hard substance that was going into the books in hand.

* THE POET AS CITIZEN *by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch* (MACMILLAN. 238 pp. $2.50).

These papers are critical, and beautifully mannered, but they do not have that hard substance. They are never trifling, for they have behind them a formidable tradition; but what is that tradition? It is Victorianism, now called, I think, Liberalism, and it is not sufficient for today; it has become the enemy of thinking. Sir Arthur with studied courtesy makes a criticism of Mr. T. S. Eliot in one paper, and beside Sir Arthur's prose touch that of Mr. Eliot seems a little heavy; but when we view the two writers under the aspect of Man Thinking, Sir Arthur's lightness ceases to be an obvious virtue. I know nothing about the future of literature, which is involved in the future of society, but I suspect that the end is approaching for these informal academic essays that refuse to be laboured and philosophical and are only allusive, on the assumption that the labours of philosophy have already been done. I have the impression that the arts are passing into the hands of a generation of critics who are technically cruder but in spirit much more radical; that is, prepared after a series of crises to go back to the roots of things.

Sir Arthur refers more than once to his Cambridge classes in the *Poetics* of Aristotle, where he evidently uses Butcher's commentary, and once makes that the topic of an excellent general lecture. Excellent, with such limitations as have been implied: it knows the text, and the literature of the subject, and it gives us the opinions of the best twentieth-century Victorian circles, and is a pretty piece of talking. It is unfortunate for it that aestheticians after a long dogmatic slumber are now re-defining certain issues, and that these are not remote from the topics discussed by

Aristotle. To the moderns it will not matter that Sir Arthur's view of Aristotle's view is one so suitable to a certain academic background; or that Butcher's view, upon which Sir Arthur's is based, is only a little more Aristotelian; nor will it matter even that Aristotle's view itself, construed this way or that, has been canonical ever since it was resurrected several centuries ago, if it is not a view that accords to art its proper meaning and dignity.

Aristotle laid down two fundamental propositions, perhaps equally startling to each modern generation that has looked at them. First, that art in form is a *mimesis* or imitation of reality; and, second, that at least one variety of art, or tragedy, has for its function the *katharsis*, or elimination from the mind by purging, of the emotions of pity and terror. I shall follow Sir Arthur's order and examine the second proposition first.

The description of a work of art as a cathartic pill, by a philosopher who was son to the King's physician, has always been a stumbling-block. On the one hand, the name of Aristotle behind this remark is revered beyond any earthly name that Europe knows how to spell. On the other hand, there cannot well be the occasion for a cathartic without there being a nasty and toxic excrement somewhere, and a state of disease resulting from its presence within the system; nor can the joy of art be anything but the pleasure that attends an act of elimination; and all the fine notions which Europeans have so easily entertained about their arts and artists must be dissipated. By this view poetry is not a pretty business: the best that can be said is that it takes the place of something worse.

The choice lies between the authority of Aristotle and the inherited European notions of art; it is a fairly definite issue. But as a rule it has not been honestly faced. The usual recourse of critics has been to saddle upon Aristotle certain "interpretations" which have for their object to make his view, which was explicit, cover and authorize their views, which are not explicit but certainly very different. In other words, they have tried to keep their Aristotle and to keep their art at the same time.

The critic who showed definitively that Aristotle meant what he seemed to say, when he said *katharsis*, was the German Bernays, in 1857; he simply collated the passages in which the Master had used the term in the *Poetics*, in the *Rhetoric*, and in the *Politics*. Nobody since has had the hardihood to dispute him openly. But it has proved just as practicable to manage Bernays's view of Aristotle, by a technique of qualifications and additions, as it was to manage Aristotle's own view in the first place. In fact there is just one more set of terms to confuse the trail.

Butcher, for example:

> Tragedy, then, does more than effect the homeopathic cure of certain passions. Its function on this view is not merely to provide an outlet for pity and fear, but to provide for them a distinctively aesthetic satisfaction, to purify and clarify them by passing them through the medium of art.

It sounds as if an aesthetic outlet for the passions were nobler than an outlet in action; but an aesthetic outlet meant, for Aristotle, nothing in the world except an outlet through representations or fictions, and therefore the most innocuous private backyard outlet that could be devised, much easier and less expensive than an outlet through action. As for the purification and clarification, these are euphemistic terms, and when applied to the passions themselves, and not to the mind from which they are expelled, they read into the act of purging some fantastic complications.

Butcher again:

> The tragic *katharsis* requires that suffering shall be exhibited in one of its comprehensive aspects; that the deeds and fortunes of the actors shall attach themselves to larger issues, and the spectator himself be lifted above the special case, and brought face to face with universal law and the divine plan of the world.

The sentence occurs late in Butcher's chapter on "The Function of Tragedy"; by this time he has brought back all the Platonic (and Anglo-Saxon Liberal) sort of ideology which Aristotle had spurned. There is not a passage in all the *Poetics* so pious and noble as this one; so the tone is false. And the argument too, for Aristotle's emphasis on the probable and the typical as the subject of tragedy was not for the purpose of talking about divine law, but for the purpose of explaining how the illusion of reality must be built up. That was a topic on which he speculated like an expert. The pink pill was not real life but the picture of life; but to make it work you had to be able to pretend it was life.

And here is Sir Arthur:

> Tragedy, by its dose of pity and terror, showing him [the man in the audience] overweening pride, ambition, lust, exaggerated in a spectacle of kings and princes, will teach him to discharge these accretions of self-pity, self-esteem, vaulting ambition, tyrannical pride, unreasonable

terrors from his soul, and dismiss him with "calm of mind, all passion spent".

With the exception of the unreasonable terrors, the accretions here consigned to the *katharsis* are gratuitous. By this account tragedy becomes the elimination of everything bad from the will, and the agent of general moral improvement. But this is not Aristotle's view; it was pity and terror that had to be eliminated, for reasons which technically were not moral at all. Aristotle did not have tragedy in his system of education; he approved it strictly as a doctor.

Sir Arthur on the *katharsis* that might be predicated of another art:

> Music, if I may use the illustration, corrects the sort of vocality to which unbridled man gives way in his bath.

The lecturer is being jolly here, so that perhaps it is not quite fair to suggest that he is off the point. A musical education will give a man something we may call "harmony", but it has nothing to do with *katharsis*. Cathartic music is not corrective, for Aristotle; it is a permitted indulgence, an orgy, to which unbridled man is invited to give way, in which certain passions will be got rid of so that they will not remain to trouble the routine of his life. Just as the matter of tragedy must be frightful if the passions are really to be purged, so the "enthusiasm" or mystic frenzy put into the music has to be extreme; the experience will then leave him relieved and easy, and permit the expectation that he will not sing in his bath at all.

These are typical of the passages, both oral and written, in which the meaning of tragedy is expounded in the Anglo-Saxon universities; though I know nothing of how it is done on the European continent. The feeling is, perhaps, that Aristotle expressed himself very sternly about the poor playwrights' function, but there is a scientific quality about it that is praiseworthy, while the expositors for their part must not let the poor playwrights down as these were noble men, and their works uplifting, and in short that everybody concerned must be all right. This, I think, is an occasional cross-section of the Liberal mind. The expositors are not to be reproached because they want to present favourable views of an art, except so far as the views are muddled and not referred to basic principles, but because they ascribe to these views the paternity of Aristotle, whose teaching was quite otherwise. Aristotle's docrine of *katharsis* is waiting to be re-examined by the modern or "radical" aestheticians. I make the following comments in the meantime.

Aristotle was temperamentally a naturalist, was in fact the first complete naturalist, and the father of the natural sciences. (This is not a private nor revolutionary judgement.) His system is positive; if examined comparatively it might yield a great deal of spiritual affinity with such nineteenth-century systems as those of Comte and Spencer. He undertook to examine all the fundamental sciences, and to place them in precise relations with each other so that they would form a hierarchy of knowledge. Knowledge was of one kind essentially: the scientific. All individuals were subject to the law of classification under ascending types of universals; to receive their classifications, and therein to perish as individuals, was the honour which he was prepared to bestow upon them.

"Ascending types." For there were the natural substances, going visibly up to and through the vegetable and animal kinds, and going also, if conceived under a metaphysical extension, infinitely beyond them. So there was Nature, and Man, and God. Aristotle's God was nothing miraculously revealed, and nothing discovered by some mystical communion; he was no more and no less than an entity inferentially established or "proved" by dialectic – the top of the infinite hierarchy of substances. The nineteenth-century Positivists would have had to excommunicate Aristotle for his metaphysics, on the well-known ground that "metaphysics is not possible"; but his metaphysics is both brief and dry, he would not have seemed a very great sinner; while, as for religion, charges would scarcely have been preferred against him. Aristotle was a magnificent naturalist, but not much of a humanist, and no sort of a religionist. For his humanism, there is his treatment of morals to consider, and his treatment of the arts. In both fields his method is reportorial and classificatory; the method of the naturalist. Compare the *Nichomachean Ethics* with the *Kritik of Practical Reason*, to see how widely books on the same subject may differ; and compare the *Poetics* with a book such as the *Aesthetic* of Croce's, to the same effect. For his religion, the contrast is even more overwhelming if the twelfth chapter of the *Metaphysics* is superposed upon any of the source-books of the world's great religions. Capacious as Aristotle's mind is admitted to have been, there was no religious genius in it.

The limitations of Aristotle's temper are so apparent, if we look at it coolly and searchingly, that the peculiar sentiment in which his name is held must have some special and indeed accidental cause. And it has; the tender glow in which it is bathed is due to the act of the Roman Church, so warm and so catholic in its humanity, so rich by its long accumulation of romantic dogmas, in taking that name unto itself and sanctifying it. Hard as it is to view any world-event critically after it has come to pass, it still strikes us as one of the strange things in human history that the Church should have swallowed so greedily the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas. That work may be thought of as simply a very great *tour de force*, but it may also be regarded as a monument of naïveté; for in it the naturalism fathered by Aristotle and the dogma of Christianity sought to enter upon a formal partnership. The principle of reason and the principle of faith were wedded! It was a remarkable, though one does not like to say an unfortunate, match. Its consequences are difficult to determine precisely, I suppose, but I seem to discover that it has involved brilliant Roman intellectuals in considerable bewilderment since. It explains how, even today, you cannot have a complete discussion with a Roman; he shifts at will back and forth between metaphysics and revelation. But the exigency preceding the Thomism of the Church was a sore one. The naturalists were rising in the world's estimation, and this Church wanted temporal as well as spiritual prestige. Whatever the motive, there has been at least one specific consequence in the fact that Aristotle, a rationalist, of low aesthetic and religious interest, has been substantially relieved of having to appear before the world in his true colours.

I have mentioned what Aristotle thought of *enthusiasm*, or religious frenzy, or, I think it may be called, mysticism. He detested it; and perhaps this might be expected, for it is not the sort of display that a natural scientist, reporting his own species, would be happy to find. Yet he found it *natural*, in the simple sense that the Greeks, much nearer to the Oriental than any modern Europeans, were powerfully given to it. He was therefore in the position of many doctors today, especially those with a Freudian learning, who have to deal with ungovernable propensities. Enthusiasm was too strong and too common to be suppressed; therefore let it be authorized, and let the Greeks have their orgiastic rites, periodically, in order to work it off and pass at least the interval periods in decency.

Closely associated with this technique for religion was the technique for art. (How close were religion and art with the Greeks is probably very well reflected by Nietzsche in his *Birth of Tragedy*.) There was not necessarily a religious frenzy enacted on the Greek stage, but there were at least scenes of secular horror, which could be described as inspiring pity and terror. Why did Greeks attend upon such scenes? Because Greeks had another weakness: they were addicted to pity and terror. But it was so important that they should be delivered of this weakness that they might as well have their drama and get rid of it there; with the understanding that they would be the better citizens after such a debauch, or between debauches.

Aristotle's disapproval of pity and terror was deliberate and, I think, carefully sustained; for after discussing other matters he is always careful to come back and mention this again. Now he shows a very intimate and somewhat better than a disinterested acquaintance with Greek drama. He is not only a penetrating critic of technique of all sorts, but a great admirer of good technique, even though resolutely cold to the whole project at which this particular technique is working. But I do not find much more there than can be accounted for under the head of scientific curiosity, and the love of a good scientist for a good job. Or at most we may express it this way: He has a sort of addiction to the drama, very much as some sober modern thinker might permit himself a single indulgence, namely, the reading of detective stories, but while he is about it makes himself an authority on the subject, knowing all the good murder novels and the tricks of all the authors.

We go back a little and ask in what light precisely he regarded pity and terror, then, since he did not approve them. In the *Nichomachean Ethics* there is much mention of fear (fear and terror being the same word in Greek), as an instinctive feeling that is sound and valuable provided it is governed and made to enter into the compound virtue of courage, where it provides the element of discretion; but excessive fear produces cowardice. The fear in the *Poetics* is something quite different. It is terror. For it has a particular occasion: the spectacle of a fine and, usually, royal man, with just enough human weakness to remind us of ourselves, suffering such ruin as no human contrivance can save him from, and no sense of justice can allow. The commentary which the spectator is forced to make will have to do with the nature of

God's world, the impotence of the moral order, and the fact of evil. If this is true, it is clear why pity and terror are distasteful to Aristotle. For he believes in his sciences, that is, in the acquisition of systematic knowledges and theoretical techniques, and in dutiful and effective living; these will fill up the whole of life if the citizen will allow them; nothing more is needed. But the sense of evil, if he indulges that, will paralyze him; the citizen of Aristotle's state has no business with brooding. We imagine Aristotle, on his part, doing little of this brooding; such a perfect and undeviating scientist he was, so firmly in possession of the secret of happiness. Nevertheless, he observed that men at large did plenty of it, and therefore he was prepared to give them public tragedies, or imitative spectacles, in which the injustice of the world-order might be concentrated for especial horror, on the theory that under such an administration the thing would hurt them least.

So music was to purge Greeks of their enthusiasm, and tragedy was to purge them of their sense of cosmic evil. But there were other arts, and even other literary arts. Did Aristotle intend these to be cathartic too? The *Poetics* is a fragment, and the record is incomplete.

But it is easy, on Aristotle's principles, to discover the *katharsis* of comedy, for example. That is, if we remember that Greek comedy was devoted peculiarly to satire and lampoon. The romantic comedy which moderns know is simply the drama which begins as tragedy, by exciting the worst apprehensions, but weakens and at length permits the happy ending. Aristotle paid his respects to it as incompetent tragedy which produces no true *katharsis.* In comedy proper the subject was the ridiculous, and it exercised in the spectator the sense of the ridiculous. But this sense is quite analogous to pity and terror, in that it unfits a man for his duty; for there is implied in the citizen, if he goes about finding everything ridiculous, the belief that he is witnessing an irrational universe. Hence the need of *katharsis* through comedy. We are assisted in attributing this sort of reasoning to Aristotle because we know that Plato had discussed the habit of ridicule, or being a buffoon, and speculated on the effect that attendance on comedy might have upon it.

Of course his conclusion here, as with the other forms of imitation, is very different from Aristotle's. Plato did not believe that any *katharsis* was effected by art, but that the passions in question were only encouraged. This was the view of a literal and uncompromising moralist. Aristotle's opinion we have seen; it was that of a man with a medical training; it amounted to saying that people had better make the best of a delicate situation, and it was precisely like the point of view of a modern military authority legalizing prostitution in the neighbourhood of the camp.

And what about that purest and slightest and most innocent form of poetry, the lyric? In his discussion of tragedy Aristotle insists that the songs and meters shall be of the highest literary or technical excellence, and he must have known that there were likely to be perfectly untragical songs in any tragedy, such as those in the *Oedipus at Colonus.* Did he think that, from his natural-scientist point of view, there was no possible harm in them? Or rather, conceived as cathartic agents, no possible good in them, no passion from which they would help to deliver the Greeks? It hardly seems possible to think he was so blind when we think of him sitting before Plato for the twenty years of his young manhood, and hearing Plato agitating himself over poetic performances of all kinds. He must have come to the conclusion that the passion of lyric poetry, the lyricism of it, was either dangerous to citizens or not dangerous; and that, if dangerous, it would best be handled by the liberal provision of lyric poetry.

But what was this lyricism? Plato had no such word. The passion behind the lyric poem is the pure passion of imitation; that is all that Plato can say about it, but from one disapproving it that is enough. Poets and their audiences imitated persons, and then the art was tragedy, or comedy, or epic. Or they imitated things, even; they indulged in the most unbecoming raptures of sympathy; not only with the prince and the shepherd, but with the mountain and the sea, the sheep, the olive tree, and the nightingale. Then the art was the lyric. It may have looked like the last abdication of human dignity; *mimesis* in its most promiscuous and irresponsible application.

We come then to the general doctrine of *mimesis*; the passion or impulse that lies behind the very purest forms of art when no other impulses are discoverable there. There could not be a topic more important in the re-examination of aesthetic theory; but its consideration must be postponed until a later article.

"I'll Take My Stand": A History

DONALD DAVIDSON

IN the autumn of 1930 I was one of twelve Southerners who made an avowal of their concern for the destiny of the South. This avowal took the form of a book of essays, preceded by a statement of principles, the whole under the title: *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition.* For certain obvious reasons it seems proper to review the origin and history of this adventure in social criticism. Among those reasons is the desire – I trust, a pardonable one – to have one true account of the book's history appear as a matter of record. It is with this purpose that I now write. But it should be understood that my expression is not the result of any new and systematic collaboration by the twelve original contributors. I am depending upon my own memory and am giving my own interpretation. When I use the first person plural, I do so for convenience only, and no presumption is intended.

In publishing *I'll Take My Stand* we were hardly so aspiring as to look for a great deal of support outside the South; but within our own section we took for granted that we might speak as Southerners. We thought that our fellow-Southerners would grasp without laborious explanation the terms of our approach to Southern problems; and that the argument, which was certain to follow, would proceed within a range of assumptions understood and accepted by all. We welcomed the argument, since we felt that all parties would benefit by a free public discussion, of a sort unknown in the South since antebellum days. Such a discussion has taken place.

Yet with due respect to the able critics, whether of South or North, who have praised or blamed, seriously or jokingly, I beg leave to point out that the discussion of *I'll Take My Stand*, although it has continued briskly over a period of nearly five years, has been somewhat less profitable than it might have been, because the contending parties have too often argued in different terms. So far as the South was concerned, we were not altogether right in assuming that we could speak as Southerners to Southerners. For all that some of our critics and we had in common in the way of premises, we might as well have been addressing Mr. Henry Ford or Mr. Granville Hicks. No doubt we should have spared ourselves many surprises if we had corrected our manuscripts accordingly. But let that pass! Between these critics and ourselves is a gap of misunderstanding which in times like these ought not to be left yawning.

To our critics (if I may judge by their pronouncements), industrialism in 1930 was a foregone conclusion, an impregnable system moving inexorably on a principle of economic determinism and already dominating the United States and the South. It had evils, which might be softened by humanitarian devices; but its possibilities for good outbalanced the evil. Mr. Gerald Johnson, for one, spoke of "a glittering civilization" that ought to arise in an industrialized South. It is easy to imagine the pictures in his mind of a wealthy, urbanized South, plentifully equipped with machines, hospitals, universities, and newspaper literates as alert as he is. The pictures of agrarianism were correspondingly bleak. To such critics, agrarianism suggested doomed farmers eaten up with hookworm, brutal labour from sunrise to sunset, or at best an idealized plantation life vanishing or utterly gone; or, so far as agrarianism meant agriculture in the strict sense, it signified a snappy commercialized occupation, making large-scale use of machines and scientific agronomy. When we championed agrarianism, they were amused and incredulous, if not disgusted, and therefore the tone of their discussion was often one of scornful levity.

It was easy enough, and sometimes exciting, to meet such levity with the retort called for under the circumstances. It would be easy now to inquire in all seriousness whether industrial civilization still glitters. But since we, no less than our critics, underestimated the speed and the thoroughness of the industrial collapse, I put this question, too, aside. Such uncomplimentary exchanges get nowhere, since they leave the premises of argument untouched. We did not and we do not think of industrialism and agrarianism in the terms that our critics have used. For their part, they have been unable to see the purposes of *I'll Take My Stand* in the proper context. It is that context which I wish to describe.

I'll Take My Stand was intended to be a book of principles and ideas, offering, with whatever implications it might have for America in general, a philosophy of Southern life rather than a detailed programme. It was based upon historical analysis and contemporary observation. It was not a handbook of farming or economics. It was not a rhapsody on Pickett's Charge and the Old Plantation. It was first of all a book for mature Southerners of the late nineteen-twenties, in the so-called New South—Southerners who, we trusted, were not so far gone in modern education as to require, for the act of comprehension, coloured charts, statistical tables, graphs, and journalistic monosyllables, but were prepared to use intelligence and memory.

In so far as it might benefit by an historical approach, the book needs to be considered against the background of 1929 and the years previous when it was being germinated and planned, and not, as it has been interpreted, against the background of Mr. Hoover's failure, the depression, and the New Deal. If we could have foreseen these events, we would have contrived to make the essays point clearly the moral that was even then implicit in them. But we were not, like the Prophet Moses, aware of any impending plagues to which we could refer for confirmation. In those years industrial commercialism was rampant. In no section were its activities more blatant than in the South, where old and historic communities were crawling on their bellies to persuade some petty manufacturer of pants or socks to take up his tax-exempt residence in their midst. This industrial invasion was the more disturbing because it was proceeding with an entire lack of consideration for its results on Southern life. The rural population, which included at least two-thirds of the total Southern population, was being allowed to drift into poverty and was being viewed with social disdain.

Southern opinion, so far as it was articulate, paid little serious attention to such matters. The older liberals of the Walter Hines Page school still believed in the easy humanitarianism of pre-World-War days. The younger liberals were damning the Fundamentalists, and rejoicing in the efforts of the sociological missionaries who were arriving almost daily from the slum-laboratories of Chicago and New York. The business interests were taking full advantage of the general dallying with superficial issues.

I do not know at what precise moment the men who contributed to *I'll Take My Stand* arrived at the notion of making their views public. I do know that as individuals, observing and thinking separately, they arrived at the same general conclusions at about the same time. Although some of us were intimate friends, we had recently been scattered and had been writing in widely different fields. I remember that we were greatly and very pleasantly surprised, when we first approached the Southern topic, to find ourselves in hearty agreement. Each had been cherishing his notions in solitude, hardly expecting them to win the approval of the determined moderns who were his friends. But if we who had been so far separated and so differently occupied could so easily reach an understanding, were there not many other Southerners, fully as apprehensive and discontented as ourselves, who would welcome a forthright assertion of principles? These must be Southern principles, we felt, for the only true salvation of the South had to come from within – there had been already too much parasitic reliance on external counsel. But the principles must also be relevant to the new circumstances.

What were the right Southern principles in the late nineteen-twenties?

Of course we never imagined that Southern principles, once defined, would apply just as benevolently in New York City as some wise men thought that Eastern metropolitan principles would apply in the South. We never dreamed of carrying across the line some kind of Southern crusade to offset the Northern push which at our own doors was making noises like a Holy War. In only one contingency (which at that time seemed remote enough) could we possibly conceive that Southern principles might have a national meaning. Whoever or whatever was to blame for the condition of American civilization in those days – and there were malcontents even in the North who were asking such embarrassing questions – certainly the South was not in any responsible sense the author of that condition. The characteristic American civilization of the nineteen-twenties had been produced under Northern auspices. It was the result of a practically undisturbed control over American affairs that the North had enjoyed since its victory at Appomattox, and of a fairly deliberate and consistent exclusion of Southern views. If ever it should occur to the people of the North that that exclusion was a defect – if ever Southern opinions should again be as hospitably entertained as were Mr. Jefferson's and Mr. Madison's in other days, then Southern principles would again have a meaning beyond the borders of the South.

The idea of publishing a book dealing with the Southern situation went back perhaps as far as 1925 and certainly had begun to take shape by 1928. For it was American industrialism of the boom period that disturbed us, no less than the later spectacle of industrial disorder. Before even a prospectus could be outlined, a great deal of discussion and correspondence was necessary. A sketch of what we had been doing just before the publication of *I'll Take My Stand* may be worth noting, since it indicates the diversity of interests from which we were drawn to focus on a single project. Tate had been in France, finishing his biography of Jefferson Davis and writing poetry and literary criticism. Ransom had been at work upon *God Without Thunder*, a study of religion and science. Wade had been writing a biography of John Wesley. Owsley was continuing the historical research that grew out of his *State Rights in the Confederacy* and that was to lead to his *King Cotton Diplomacy*. Nixon, who had just left Vanderbilt for Tulane, had been studying the Populist movement and the problem of the tenant farmer. Warren was at Oxford; he had published a biography of John Brown. Lytle had been in the East, writing plays and acting. Lanier had been teaching at New York University and doing research in the psychology of race. Kline had just received a Master of Arts degree in English at Vanderbilt University. I was attempting to edit a book page and to follow the curious tergiversations that modernism produced among the rising Southern writers. As for the other two contributors (who were not of the "Nashville group"), Stark Young, in addition to dramatic criticism, had written some excellent novels on Southern themes which at that time were none too well appreciated; and John Gould Fletcher, in England, had turned to social criticism in *The Two*

Frontiers, a comparative study of Russia and America.

Most of us had a good deal of cosmopolitanism in our systems, the result of travel or residence abroad or of prolonged absorption in literature, pedagogy, or technical research. Those of us who had written poetry and criticism were painfully aware of the harsh constriction that modern life imposes on the artist. We were rebellious that such constriction should operate upon Southern artists – or, for that matter, upon any artist; and some of us had written essays asking why this should be so. All of us, I think, were turning with considerable relief from the shallow social criticism and tortured art of the nineteen-twenties to the works of the new historians and biographers who were somehow avoiding both the complaisance of the old Southern liberals and the dissociated cynicism of the younger ones. In their perfectly objective restatement of Southern history and American history we found new cause for our growing distrust of the scorn that was being volleyed at the "backward" South. What the historians said was in all really important points at startling variance with the assumptions of social critics and the "social workers" whose procedure was based on big-city attitudes. Suddenly we realized to the full what we had long been dimly feeling, that the Lost Cause might not be wholly lost after all. In its very backwardness the South had clung to some secret which embodied, it seemed, the precise elements out of which its own reconstruction – and possibly even the reconstruction of America – might be achieved. With American civilization, ugly and visibly bent on ruin, before our eyes, why should we not explore this secret?

We were the more inclined to this course because of a natural loyalty to the South which the events of the nineteen-twenties had warmed and quickened. This was our first and most enduring point of agreement. That loyalty had both combative and sentimental aspects, I am sure. We were and are devoted to the South in spite of its defects, because it is our country, as our mother is our mother. But we have never been in the false and uncritical position attributed to us by some interpreters, of invariably preferring Southern things merely because they are Southern. For the record let it be noted that no more drastic criticisms of Southern life and affairs, past and present, can be found than in some of the books and essays of Owsley and Tate; and they, with Wade and others, have on occasion been denounced by Southern organizations for their "disloyalty". We never believed that one could be a good Southerner by simply drinking mint-juleps or by remarking sententiously on the admirable forbearance of Lee after Appomattox.

Such were our guiding motives. The search for Southern principles was a more deliberate affair, and doubtless had a good deal in it of that rationalization which is so often condemned and so generally indulged in. I am sure that at first we did not do much thinking in strictly economic terms. Uppermost in our minds was our feeling of intense disgust with the spiritual disorder of modern life – its destruction of human integrity and its lack of purpose; and, with this, we had a decided sense of impending fatality. We wanted a life which through its own conditions and purposefulness would engender naturally (rather than by artificial stimulation), order, leisure, character, stability, and that would also, in the larger sense, be aesthetically enjoyable. What history told us of the South, what we knew of it by experience, now freshened by conscious analysis, and what we remembered of the dignity and strength of the generation that fought the Confederate War (for most of us were old enough to have received indelible impressions from survivors who never in anything but a military sense surrendered) – all this drove us straight to the South and its tradition. The good life we sought was once embodied here, and it lingered yet. Even in its seeming decline it contrasted sharply with the mode of life that we feared and disliked. The pertinent essays and reviews which we wrote before the appearance of *I'll Take My Stand* all had this central theme. Readers who wish to look for them will find them in *Harper's Magazine*, *The Forum*, the *Sewanee Review*, the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, and elsewhere.

As we thought and talked further, we realized that the good life of the Old South, in its best period, and the life of our own South so far as it was still characteristic, was not to be separated from the agrarian tradition which was and is its foundation. By this route we came at last to economics and so found ourselves at odds with the prevailing schools of economic thought. These held that economics determines life and set up an abstract economic existence as the governor of man's effort. We believed that life determines economics, or ought to do so, and that economics is no more than an instrument, around the use of which should gather many more motives than economic ones. The evil of industrial economics was that it squeezed all human motives into one narrow channel and then looked for humanitarian means to repair the injury. The virtue of the Southern agrarian tradition was that it mixed up a great many motives with the economic motive, thus enriching it and reducing it to a proper subordination.

Therefore the agrarian tradition was necessarily defined as "a way of life" from which originated, among other things, an economy. In *I'll Take My Stand* we did not enlarge upon the technical features of the economy, which could wait for a later description, but we treated other features of the Southern tradition at elaborate length and in broad contrast with the hostile industrial conceptions. The times seemed to call for just this emphasis, but I can see now that it puzzled our critics, who had somehow learned to think of "agrarian" in the strictly occupational terms used by newspapers and professional economists. Though it undoubtedly took too much for granted in our readers, the definition was sufficient for our immediate purposes. To us it signified a complete order of society based ultimately upon the land. It presupposed several kinds of farmers and endless varieties of other occupations. The elements of such a society had always existed in the South. They must now be used and improved upon if people were to remain their own masters and avoid the consequences of an industrial order which we could already see was headed toward communism or fascism.

The large-scale plantation had been an important part of the older Southern life, but we were rather critical of the plantation, both because we felt its rôle had been over-emphasized and sentimentalized, and because we were interested in correcting, for the modern South, the abuses of the plantation system. We thought the rôle of the small farmer, or yeoman farmer, had been very much underestimated. We were concerned with the fate of the tenant farmer, with rural towns and communities, and with their importance in setting the tone of Southern life, even in the cities. We wished that the greatest possible number of people might enjoy the integrity and independence that would come with living upon their own land. Therefore we tended to push the large plantation into the background of consideration and to argue the case of the yeoman farmer. In this we followed Jefferson; but where the political rôle of the South was concerned we followed Calhoun, for it was the obvious, if regrettable, duty of the South to continue to defend itself against an aggressive, exploiting North.

Yet undeniable as our nostalgia for old times may have been – and quite justified – we had no intention of drawing a mellow and pretty picture of an idealized past. We leaned rather far in the other direction. Certainly Lytle's essay, "The Hind Tit", was aimed to show the merits of an agrarian life even in its roughest and most backwoodsy state. We were determined, furthermore, to make the broadest possible application of the general theory, and therefore we planned and secured essays that discussed religion, education, manners, the theory of progress, the race problem, the historical background, the arts, the problem of the college graduate. Only one of the essays dealt with economics specifically. One essay outlined the general argument of the book, and like several of the other essays included a close negative analysis of industrialism, which we took pains to define rather carefully. We did not, of course, mean that the term industrialism should include any and every form of industry and every conceivable use of machines; we meant giant industrialism, as a force dominating every human activity: as the book says, "the decision of society to invest its economic resources in the applied sciences".

From the outset we had to deal with the problem of who the contributors ought to be. This finally resolved itself into the problem of who could be trusted to approach the issues as we saw them. A few of us, at Nashville, had enjoyed the benefits of long friendship and much discussion. We knew each other's minds, but we needed help. A memorandum in my file indicates that we planned the volume to be "deliberately partisan" to an extent which would exclude certain kinds of contributors: "sentimental conservatives whose sectionalism is of an extreme type" and "progressives whose liberalism is of an 'uplift' type". My note further says: "The volume will emphasize trans-Appalachian Southern thought and will therefore have a minority of contributors (if any at all) from the Atlantic states". But the names of possible contributors as recorded in this prospectus suggest how catholic our intention, or how great our innocence of mind, was in those days. Besides some names of the actual contributors, it includes the following: William E. Dodd, Broadus Mitchell, Newbell Niles

Puckett, W. W. Alexander, Julia Peterkin, G. B. Winton, Grover Hall, Louis Jaffee, Julian Harris, Judge Finis Garrett, Chancellor James H. Kirkland. To these were later added the names of Gerald Johnson, Stringfellow Barr, John Peale Bishop. But of the persons named only two were actually solicited — Gerald Johnson and Stringfellow Barr; and both declined, Mr. Johnson with a curt jocular quip, Mr. Barr after a friendly exchange of correspondence which seemed at first to indicate his adherence.

Perhaps these rebuffs discouraged us from a wider solicitation. At any rate the contributors finally agreed upon came into the book largely because, by reason of close acquaintance, this or that person felt they could be counted on and could presume to approach them. Even then, for the sake of unity, we felt obliged to draw up the "Statement of Principles" printed as an introduction. Each contributor was asked to approve these principles and to offer suggestions of his own. The "statement" was revised several times. Nearly all of the contributors had something to suggest, and most of the suggestions were duly embodied. Finally, it represented composite opinion, arrived at after much trouble. The actual phrasing was the work of Ransom, except for some passages and sentences here and there. I remember one last-minute change of wording. The second paragraph originally began: "Nobody now proposes for the South, or for any other community in this country, an independent political destiny. That idea was finished in 1865." The latter sentence was changed to read, "That idea *is thought to have been* finished in 1865."

There was no editor in the usual sense; the book was a joint undertaking. However, some of us at Nashville acted as an informal steering committee and were obliged to hold many consultations more or less editorial. One hotly argued editorial difficulty arose not long before the book was scheduled to appear. Tate, Warren, and Lytle held that the title ought to be changed from *I'll Take My Stand* to *A Tract Against Communism.* Over against this suggestion, which had good reason in it, was the embarrassing fact that the book was practically ready for issue. The following extract from a letter by Tate, written immediately after this incident, is prophetic of what was in store for us: "It is over now. Your title triumphs. And I observe that Alexander [of the Nashville *Tennesseean*] today on the basis of the title defines our aims as an 'agrarian revival' and reduces our real aims to nonsense. These are, of course, an agrarian revival in the full sense, but by not making our appeal through the title to ideas, we are at the mercy of all the Alexanders – for they need only to draw portraits of us plowing or cleaning the spring to make hash of us before we get a hearing."

Tate was exactly right as to what would happen, though he now says: "It would have happened anyway." In the contentious months that followed, when we argued with all objectors who were worth arguing with, such portraits or far worse ones were drawn. We had virtually dared our contemporaries to debate with us the question, then more or less tabooed, of whether the new industrialism was as good for the South as was claimed. With due allowance for various friendly receptions and a generous allotment of newspaper space which certainly gave us a hearing of a sort, it seems worth while to record a few samples of the raillery, not always good-humoured, with which our contemporaries greeted us. They begged to remind us of ox-carts and outdoor privies, and inquired whether we ever used porcelain bathtubs. If we admired agrarianism, what were we doing in libraries, and why were we not out gee-hawing? Had we ever tried to "make money" on a farm? Did we want to "turn the clock back" and retreat into "a past that never was"?

The Chattanooga *News*, although it complimented us with a series of very lengthy editorials, dubbed us "the Young Confederates", smiled indulgently over our "delightful economic absurdities", and said: "This quixotic tilting of literary lances against industrialization smacks of the counsel of despair." The Macon *Telegraph*, famous liberal newspaper that carries on its masthead a quotation from Mill's "Essay on Liberty", tore into the book, even before it was published, with all the savagery of the Chicago *Tribune's* best South-baiting editorials. Under the sarcastic title, "Lee, We Are Here!" the *Telegraph* began its insinuations thus: "One of the strangest groups to flourish in the South is the Neo-Confederates. This socially reactionary band does not come out of Atlanta – hatch of the Ku Klux Klan and the Supreme Kingdom – but appears to have its headquarters in Nashville." Later, with the book in hand, the *Telegraph* represented it as "a nostalgic cult owning a basis no more serious than sentiment", "an amusing patter-song", "a high spot in the year's hilarity". The New Orleans *Tribune* quoted with avowed relish some phrases which the New York *Times* had editorially applied to the book: "a boy's Froissart of tales", "twelve Canutes", "worn-out romanticism".

A few critics, but only a very few, were more serious-minded and friendly. Some of these, oddly enough, were Eastern critics, who had lived at close quarters with industrialism and learned to dislike it; and in the end an Eastern magazine, THE AMERICAN REVIEW, gave us both understanding and hospitality of a sort we have never received, for example, from the *Virginia Quarterly Review*. And among Southern critics, it was a notable fact that our most consistent newspaper support came from Birmingham, the South's most highly industrialized city; from John Temple Graves II, of the Birmingham *News*.

Since we are not thin-skinned, we have managed to survive a curious notoriety of the sort that tempts friends to smile askance and tap their foreheads significantly. But our publishers practically dropped the book, no sooner than it was issued.

To the more sober charge that the agrarian proposals were not accompanied by a specific programme we have always been disposed to give heed. We had not attempted to frame any positive set-up for industry under an agrarian economy, and even our programme for the farm was not much particularized in the book itself. To an eminent and friendly Tennesseean, who deprecated our lack of a political programme, one of us answered that we represented "a body of principles looking for a party", and he was thereupon invited to run for Governor on an agrarian ticket. The truth is that *I'll Take My Stand* was by necessity a general study, preliminary to a specific application which we hoped the times would permit us, with others, to work out slowly and critically. The emergencies of 1930 and later years made such deliberate procedure impossible. But even when the book was in press we should have been pleased to add the very specific proposals which were, in fact, made public during the debates sponsored by various newspapers and educational institutions. Ransom, for example, throughout 1930 and 1931 argued for a kind of subsistence farming (hardly of the later Rooseveltian model) and for government policies which would bring about a wide distribution of owned land. He has later developed these proposals in magazine articles and pamphlets. In fact most of the contributors, through whatever media have been open to them, in recent years have pushed the principles of agrarianism far beyond the point represented in *I'll Take My Stand* and have made proposals about as specific as could be expected from men who do not have the good fortune to be members of Congress or of the Brain Trust. These may be viewed as a substitute, however inadequate, for a second volume of *I'll Take My Stand*, which through causes beyond our control we have not been able to publish.

Since my purpose here is expository rather than argumentative, I will do no more than indicate the direction of agrarian proposals. Most of them have been fully stated by Frank Owsley in his recent article, "The Pillars of Agrarianism" (THE AMERICAN REVIEW, March 1935). We consider the rehabilitation of the farmer as of first importance to the South, the basis of all good remedial procedure; and we therefore favour a definite policy of land conservation, land distribution, land ownership. At the risk of appearing socialistic to the ignorant, we favour legislation that will deprive the giant corporation of its privilege of irresponsibility, and that will control or prevent the socially harmful use of labour-saving (or labour-evicting) machinery. We advocate the encouragement of handicrafts, or of modified handicrafts with machine tools. In this connection, we believe that the only kind of new industry the South can now afford to encourage is the small industry which produces fine goods involving craftsmanship and art. We oppose the introduction of "mass-producing" industries that turn out coarse goods and cheap gadgets. We favour the diversion of public and private moneys from productive to non-productive uses — as for example to the arts — that over-accumulation of invested capital may be forestalled. We hold very strongly for a revision of our political framework that will permit regional governments to function adequately; and that will enable the national government to deal sensibly with issues in which the interests of regions are irreconcilable, or prevent the kind of regional exploitation, disguised as paternalism, now being practised on the South. That is to say, we favour a true Federalism and oppose Leviathanism, as ruinous to the South and eventually fatal to the nation.

It may be said of such proposals that they are not at all points peculiar to the Southern Agrarians, but are held by persons of various bias, some of whom may lean to an industrial point of view. I am sure this observation would be correct. The so-called Agrarians are not a neatly organized band of conspirators. They are individuals united in a common concern but differing among themselves as to ways and means. They hope that their concern for the South, and to some extent their approach to Southern problems, is shared by many persons. They are conscious that many other minds than theirs are busy with these problems. They would be glad, as the book states, to be counted as members of a national agrarian movement.

Nevertheless, it is fair to emphasize at least two points of fundamental difference between the agrarian approach and others. We are interested in a way of life that will restore economics, among other things, rather than in an economics that promises merely to restore bare security, on hazardous terms, while leaving untouched the deep corruptions that render the security hardly capable of being enjoyed or nobly used. For this reason we are obliged to regard the Roosevelt Administration with a mixture of approval and distrust, for its approach, to the Southern situation especially, is too much of the latter order. At times President Roosevelt and his advisers seem to be governed by only two motives: the economic and the humanitarian. They propose to repair our faltering economic system and to guarantee a modicum of comfort to the human casualties of our false way of life. But they are doing nothing to repair the false way of life. Rather they seem to want to crystallize it in all its falsity. We believe that no permanent solution of our troubles can be found in that way. Complication will be heaped upon complication, until we shall be destroyed in the end from sheer moral impotence. But that is hard to explain to people who insist in believing that labour can be benefited only by the invention of machinery and the promotion of labour unions, or who do not admit that the same human will which builds skyscrapers can also abandon them.

The second point of difference is one on which we would make few concessions, or none. Undoubtedly the South is a part of modern economy. Who could deny that? We should nevertheless insist that the South still has liberty to determine what its rôle will be with relation to that economy; and that that liberty ought not to be abrogated by the South or usurped by others. Unless the South can retain that power of decision, it can retain little of what may be, in any good sense, Southern. Above all, it cannot keep its self-respect or ever have the confidence in its own genius which is the greatest moral necessity of a living people.

[*Inquiries from readers about "I'll Take My Stand", which has frequently been mentioned in* The American Review, *have prompted us to make arrangements with the publishers to handle orders for the book. The price is $3.00, postpaid. The supply of copies is limited.—Those who wish may obtain both "I'll Take My Stand" and a subscription (or renewal of subscription) to* The American Review *for $6.00.*]

A Note on Nicholas Berdyaev

AUSTIN WARREN

Wandering between two worlds
One dead, the other waiting to be born.

So Arnold described himself and the sensitively minded among his contemporaries. How much the more sharply do his lines describe us, to whom Augustan and Victorian days seem alike tranquil in contrast to our own. The decay of religion and art, the waxing supremacy of industrialism, the reign of the Gradgrinds and the Podsnaps: the Victorian prophets recognized, with apprehension and groaning of spirit, these signs of their times. But traditional culture and faith have continued to wane, while capitalism, rightly assayed by earlier scrutinizers as spiritually defunct, has, in our day, become economically moribund as well. Critics of all schools unite in their certainty that, whatever is to follow or ought to follow, this is "The End of our Time".

We are living in a moratorium, a state of suspense and tension. Tomorrow a war may break out which will terminate what we have known of civilization. Ahead of us, as our next "world", may lie universal communism; or a new feudalism, constituted by small, militaristic, autonomous nations, internally cohesive, mutually repellent; or some *tertium quid*.

No contemporary writer is more aware of this tension than Nicholas Berdyaev,* a Russian of prophetic spirit. For a few years after the Revolution, he was Professor of Philosophy in the University of Moscow. Though expelled in 1922 and now an *emigré* teacher in Paris, he betrays none of the bitterness "natural" to the dispossessed. A Christian, he forgives; a philosopher, he ungrudgingly concedes whatever strength there is in the argument and the practice of his opponents. He respects the earnestness and integrity of the Soviets. With their work for the material welfare of the masses he seems in more or less complete sympathy. He does not undertake to defend Czarism; he neither believes in the possibility of its restoration nor wishes it. In his *Russian Revolution* he asserts that the future of Christianity depends on whether Christians "decisively cleave off supporting capitalism and social injustice. . . . The future belongs, whatever happens, to the working classes, to the workers; it is inevitable, and it is just." He agrees with the Communists that "the idea of methodically planning out the norms of economic life is, on principle, a right one. The liberal [*i.e., laissez-faire*] principle of formal freedom in such matters produces enormous injustices and deprives a considerable portion of humanity of all real freedom." In short, Berdyaev is a Christian socialist.

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* THE BOURGEOIS MIND *by Nicholas Berdyaev* (SHEED & WARD. 130 pp. $1.25). This latest volume contains, in addition to the titular essay, three others: "Man and Machine"; "Christianity

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and Human Activity"; "The Worth of Christianity and the Unworthiness of Christians". Berdyaev employs *bourgeois* not in its economic or Marxian sense but with an equally pejorative connotation, half as the equivalent of Arnold's "Philistine", half as "this-worldly". The second essay puts briefly the position expounded by Mumford in *Technics and Civilization:* the machine is not to be rejected but to be mastered. The ideas of the last two essays come into my general discussion of Berdyaev. The author tends to diffuseness; but this short volume, though it displays no marked originality, amply reveals his poignancy, his noble spirit, his candour, and may be recommended as the most attractive introduction to his work.

Nowhere in his books does he attempt to justify the past iniquities of ecclesiasticism. He does not sanction the use of compulsion in matters of the mind or spirit, opposes the temporal power of the Church, denies inquisition and censorship, persistently distinguishes between Christianity and the Church, and is ready to grant that Eastern Orthodoxy had largely become magic, superstition, and obscurantism.

Berdyaev's strength and his weakness lie in his detachment from the social forms in which ideas incarnate themselves. All the evils which the Soviets attribute to Christianity, Berdyaev can assign to the Visible Church, chiefly made up of "pseudo-Christians". Revelation is by hypothesis pure, but the sullied minds and corrupt wills of men have distorted and perverted the truth and malpractised its injunctions. By thus consigning to the unmercies of atheist critics the history of "Christendom", Berdyaev relieves himself of a task onerous for the most agile apologist; but he further simplifies his office by opposing to Sovietism (which is at once a philosophical dogma and an economic programme) neither a Church nor a Creed. Berdyaev is still, I believe, an Orthodox; but like his hero Dostoievski he bears himself with the latitude of a philosopher, and what he undertakes to oppose to the errors of present-day Russia is "pure Christianity"—that is, his own selection from the Scriptures and the theologians, his subjective religion.

It is therefore puzzling to find Berdyaev's books sponsored by a leading Roman Catholic publisher, and winning their chief public among the Catholic intelligentsia; for in effect Berdyaev's "position" is analogous to that of our American Protestant, Reinhold Niebuhr, who similarly combines what Mumford has called "basic", or post-Marxian, communism with a strongly eschatological Christianity.

Like Niebuhr, Berdyaev labours under the difficulty – the "tension", as Von Hügel would have called it – of concerning himself with the temporal, with the "changes and chances of this mortal life", with man's activities in time; while he is at centre, affectionally as well as intellectually, a supernaturalist for whom the real world is spaceless and eternal, the realm of essences and souls. In the politico-economic sphere, at "social planning", the Soviets have the advantage over men like Niebuhr and Berdyaev. By eliminating the "eternal", by denying the "future" life, they can concentrate on the present. It is ungainsayably easier to regiment men conceived of as bodies functioning within a determined economic context than it is to reconcile physical security with spiritual freedom. No Christian or humanist could construct or maintain a state which would operate with the "efficiency" of Russia as it will be a decade from now. In simplifying their conception of human nature, the Soviets have correspondingly simplified the task of government.

How can one think and feel deeply of the Eternal without minimizing the historical? "A thousand years are in Thy sight but as yesterday" may be translated into the vernacular as "It will all be the same in a thousand years". In Andreyev's *Lazarus*, the eyes that have looked into immortality can but wither and scorch the souls of the living. Again, how assert the omnipotence of God without nullifying the free will of man? These are the perpetual problems of the religious philosopher. Berdyaev is painfully conscious of them, but he does not solve them. He asserts free will, indeed, and he asserts the need for economic change; but he is too conscious of the Divine Will and of Destiny to be an effective proponent of these finite and historic needs. Such annihilating attitudes toward "life" make religion the "opiate of the masses" who would revolt did they not shrug away the temporal as but temporal and submit.

We must make up our minds whether we really believe that man is an immortal soul. If he is, then men's economic like their physical ills may be the instruments of their salvation. "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Not to the bourgeois was such a promise made. "How hardly shall a rich man enter." Then why strive to make the poor prosperous, thus endangering their entry?

The "pure" Christian (*i.e.*, the convinced supernaturalist) will hardly be a reformer, though he will certainly exercise his loving kindness in personally relieving whatever distress he encounters. The "pure" philosopher, like Spinoza or Santayana, is equally disqualified. Intellectually detached from the masses, viewing with disdain and pity the wrangles of men, he will fix his gaze upon the steadfast essences which abide, unperturbed, though creeds crack and dynasties fall.

Most men are neither pure Christians nor pure philosophers. They move in that patois world of "I says to him, and he says to me"— the world of having or losing a job, of keeping up with the neighbour, or getting on with the wife — a world of personal and economic relations. They are not habitually conscious of their immortal souls, and when on Sunday the priest mentions their souls they envisage a future life in time and space where, deprived of all which they enjoyed here, they would, one anticipates, be profoundly miserable.

Can "most men" be reached by pure philosophy, pure culture, or pure Christianity? I see no evidence to make one sanguine. Institutions pervert by popularizing the truth. But they are also dispensers and mediators. The intellectual may condescend to the university; the mystic, to the Church. But these organized forms, these "establishments", stimulate mind and soul in "most men" and are the only means through which they gain nourishment. To minimize institutions is to turn culture and religion into the private prerogation of the *élite*.

Berdyaev, who, in effect, opposes to the institution of Sovietism a gospel of disembodied spirit, must inevitably excel in criticism and resort to the apocalyptic for the "end of it all". If the spiritual aspirations of individuals are all that can be opposed to Marxism, then the defeat of its dehumanizing and grey paradise seems humanly impossible.

Christians and humanists have two courses open to them: either they can abandon all hope of making the Kingdom come to earth, resigning to the politicians, as they have in the immediate past, the management of the state, not unreluctant, since concern with the masses is wearisome and discouraging, and since their treasure is laid up in the inner life or in heaven. Or they must say to themselves, history is not the antithesis of spirit but its approximate incarnation. Revelation bears the impress of those who receive as well as him who gives. Church and University mediate between the highest and the lowest. If we accept the latter alternative, then our task is not to antithesize insight and institution, not to attack or abolish the corporate (for the soul works only through the body) but to animate it.

In the last analysis, Berdyaev's is a "world-fleeing" rather than a "world-penetrating" attitude. His mind ponders the central problems; he asks the right, the deepest questions; but his answer is essentially eschatological: for him the colours of existence pale into a common white before the radiance of eternity. He cannot help those who, whether Christians or humanists, believe that it is the function of the highest to incarnate itself.

The Modernism of French Poetry

PAUL ELMER MORE

IN MY recent study of James Joyce I made the observation that his work was in English a more or less exotic offshoot of a literary movement whose regular and logical development in France had been analyzed in Marcel Raymond's *De Baudelaire au surréalisme*; and I called attention to the curious fact that the acknowledged fathers of the whole movement were three Americans: Poe and Whitman and Henry James. It has seemed to me worth while to add a few words in development of this casual comment, as a sort of pendant to that essay.

Of the primary position of these Americans there is abundant evidence in the pages of M. Raymond and of other critics in the same field. This is particularly true of Poe, as can be seen by any reader of Paul Valéry's philosophical justification of modernism in *Variété*, which not only contains various scattered allusions to Poe's influence, but devotes a long essay to the metaphysic of *Eureka*; and indeed M. Valéry is but exploiting the well-known fascination of the American poet and critic for Baudelaire, who is commonly taken as the fountain and origin of the cycle of adventures from symbolism to its present efflorescence in super-realism. In Poe's verse can be found something of that dissolution of the solid world of phenomena into images of an inner fluctuation of the soul which is the very essence of "symbolism", and in his critical dissertations there is a clear exposition of the ideal of pure poetry towards which the symbolists have all been straining. From this source came that conception of "the rhythmical creation of beauty" so dominant in the aesthetic theorizing of Joyce's *Portrait*, with the belief that such a rhythmical evocation can be effected only when the creative genius is liberated from any obligation to the duties and truth of prosaic life – with the practical result, in Joyce, of *Ulysses.*

Whitman's influence, though it extended to the realm of art itself as seen in the spread of *vers libre*, bears more directly on the philosophical, or psychological, aspect of the movement. The heart of the matter is in the *Song of Myself*, in which two entities are set over against each other, – the absolute Ego and all about it the objective world which consists of a flowing stream of impressions having in themselves no distinction of values:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

. . . .

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back awhile sufficed, at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbour for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

That is the creed of egoism and naturalism which Paul Valéry was to expound as a new metaphysic of the schools.

For the third we have the later novels of Henry

James. Those who have read Percy Lubbock's subtle study of *The Craft of Fiction* need not be reminded how the originality of *The Ambassadors*, for instance, consists in laying hold of the various, often contradictory, desires and needs of an individual soul, and in presenting these as if they were almost independent actors engaged in conflict within that soul as their stage. So the traditional drama of person against person, or of person against fate, is changed into an inner clash of impersonal motives. To Mr. Lubbock this psychological drama, in which the psyche is the scene of action rather than itself an actor, is the culmination of a long movement, a climax beyond which there is no direct advance, a great but sterile art. But take from James the root of New England conscience (for that is his inheritance, whatever the place of his birth), give to each of the psychological combatants freedom and equal validity, and for the inner drama of moral issues you have exactly the mere flux of impressions, the accidental association of sentiments and desires, the so-called stream of consciousness, so aptly exploited for the purposes of later fiction and poetry. This is not a fanciful affiliation. It may be that James's example may seem to bear more on the method than the spirit of recent art, but it is of the very nature of art that method and spirit can scarcely be dissociated. And if it be true that his primacy is less generally recognized than Whitman's, not to mention Poe's, we have nevertheless the definite statement of Gertrude Stein (who belongs to the French group we are studying), that she regarded the author of *The Ambassadors* quite definitely as her forerunner, and that he "was the first person in literature to find the way to the literary methods of the twentieth century".

Neither Poe nor Whitman, and still less James, would have been at ease among the actual symbolists and *surréalistes* of Paris. In all three of them something remained from the American tradition which held them at the border of the promised land of freedom. But it was their partial emancipation from that tradition that was seized upon and magnified by the bolder rebels of the Continent. To Baudelaire for instance Poe was the very symbol of revolt against the bourgeois conventions for which America as a whole was the type. His admiration for Poe cannot be severed from his hatred of Poe's people. Furthermore, in pointing to these immediate sources we must not forget that everything in them can be found, and found more fully developed, *i.e.*, more consciously disembarrassed of the swaddling bands of convention, in the *romantische Schule* of Germany long before the discovery of Poe by Baudelaire; but history is full of new starts, and for the leaders of the modern movement the recognized fathers were primarily Poe, and secondarily Whitman and James. The value of M. Raymond's work is that in his pages we can trace the evolution of a whole period from these beginnings – the ideal of pure art, the dualism of the absolute Ego set against an objective world deprived of any distinction of values in itself, the interacting flux of contacts between these two poles – all mapped out with the precision and clarity for which the French genius is deservedly famous.

I must be brief in my account of M. Raymond's treatise, only prefacing my remarks with the assurance that a careful reading of the book will bring its reward to those who, like myself, admit an imperfect acquaintance with the successive schools and the many authors he describes. His analysis begins with an *Introduction* in which he studies the origin and growth of French symbolism in Baudelaire and Rimbaud and Mallarmé. As distinguished from the classical writers who were frankly intellectualists, and from the poets gathered about Victor Hugo, for whom the objective world still retained something of its independent outlines, these newer romantics would eschew any knowledge and any interest which should impinge upon the pure sentiment of the Self, and would employ their imagination in converting the sensible world into bare metaphors and symbols of its shifting but autonomous moods. In doing this they made of language what Baudelaire described as an instrument of suggestive magic. "To deliver one's soul", to rediscover "the state of nature", what was this, asks M. Raymond, but the hope, if not the consequence, of an ancestral dream half drowned in the unconscious, the dream of a magical universe wherein the spirit should hold sway over phenomena freed from the intermediary authority of reason.

After this Introduction the first section of M. Raymond's treatise is entitled *Le Reflux*, or Ebb-Tide. Here, in separate chapters, he considers the various poets and critics who reacted against symbolism at the end of the last century. Among these he lists the *Romans* – Moréas, du Plessys, La Tailhède, Ernest Raynaud – who, feeling a certain foreign element in the new romanticism, cast back in a kind of archaizing fury to an earlier reform, thoroughly French, instituted by Deschamps and Ronsard. Others, such as Maurras, less narrowly national in their search for *l'antique renom latin des Gaules*, looked abroad for a renewal of the classical tradition. These symbolists, declared Maurras, have surrendered the classical and French sense of style, which consists not so much in charging words with colour and music and in using them to convey an *état d'âme* more or less evanescent, as in imposing order and movement upon thought, and in subjecting thought to the higher reason.

Then follows a chapter on *La Poésie du jeune siècle* (the twentieth), led by Régnier, Viélé-Griffin, Verhaeren, Francis Jammes, and others, who professedly were continuators of the naturalistic romanticism discarded by the *Romans*, but sought to combine with it a sort of humanism which should embrace "the whole of life" and effect a reconciliation with the modern world more realistically conceived. Yet withal the aim of poetry must not be divorced from the poet's *prestige d'être soi.*

Passing over the chapters on *Le Réveil de la pensée méridionale* and on the renewal of nationalism *Sous le signe de Minerve casquée*, we reach the second section of the book entitled *A la recherche d'un nouvel ordre français*, the chapters of which we need not follow in detail, but content ourselves with picking out such points as the conflict between Abbé Brémond's attempt to humiliate pure poetry before the religious mysticism of Christianity with Jean Royère's contrary elevation of poetry to an independence of its own: "Symbolism was nothing but the will to penetrate to the very essence of poesy"; and "The poets who formed the generation of symbolists have all regarded their art as an absolute." Here belong the philosophy of the absolute Ego as propounded by Paul Valéry, and Claudel's mystical realism; and here are included the group of Unanimistes, Whitmaniens, Poètes de l'Abbaye, the "Men of Good Will", who developed a sort of "post-naturalism" in which the more frankly egocentric naturalism is masqued under the colours of democratic and socialistic ideology.

But I fear this cataloguing résumé is becoming a bore, and I must deal more succinctly with the next section of M. Raymond's history in which he gathers together, under the general head of *L'aventure et la révolte*, the poets more faithful to the initial impulse of symbolism. Here we find associated in a kind of snarling comity two distinct groups of adventurous rebels. On the one side were those who turned from the traditional search for an unworldly beauty to a glorification of the hard facts of materialism, as Marinetti announced in the programme of 1909: The poet of the future will chant only the multi-coloured and polyphonic revolutions in our modern capitals, the nocturnal vibration of the dock-yards and sheds under their glaring electric lights, the railway stations and factories, etc. On the other side are those who denounce any attempt to express the phenomenal world by clear ideas in favour of a general anti-intellectualism; or who reject the traditional appearance of objects for some theory of pure vision in the manner of the cubists; or in despair of truth end by renouncing any sort of choice or order among the chaos of impressions, hoping that somehow, even if in his own despite, the poet's verse will attain to some sort of significance. It is but a step from such a despairing hope to the clownish school of Dadaists, who mocked at the idea of any transmissible meaning whatsoever. We have arrived at the threshold of *surréalisme*, a name first adopted, I believe, by Guillaume Apollinaire.

There is variety enough in the methods of the self-styled *surréalistes*, and indeed what else could be expected of a party of avowed rebels against authority. But there is also a certain unanimity derived from the very principle of revolt. In the manifesto of 1924 they declare their aim to be "a psychical automatism by which one proposes to express, whether orally or by writing or in any other manner, the real functioning of thought (*pensée*) as a spontaneous dictation, in the absence of any control exercised by reason and apart from any preoccupation whether aesthetic or ethical". Such an automatic communication can be effective only under the most favourable conditions: the would-be poet must abstract himself from all surrounding actuality, close so far as possible the gates of the senses that open upon the exterior world, lull reason to sleep so as to maintain himself in a state like dreaming, and then listen (but without any conscious effort of the will), and write, as thought flows in upon him.

Such is the theory of *surréalisme*. And a very little reflection will show that, for one thing, it rests on a complete confusion of terms. The hard distinctions of nature as these appear to the normal (*bourgeois*) mind are, in the Bergsonian vocabulary, a product of the falsifying reason; and the first procedure of the poet is to repudiate this distinguishing faculty for a trancelike state in which impressions of the outer world float about like shadowy forms incessantly melting one into the other. The images grasped by the imagination are metaphorical by virtue of a certain magical principle of identity. To call this automatic vision of fleeting forms thought (*pensée*) is an abuse of terms. And so of the term super-realism. Every *surréaliste* text presupposes a return to chaos, in the bosom of which a vague something called super-nature spontaneously sketches itself as it were a thin filigree on the substratum of being. In fact this evocation of a super-realistic world ordinarily appears as a coalescence of undistinguished impressions from without with the emanations that float like vapours from the psychical substratum of the unconscious. All which is an attempt to discover reality not in what is above but in what is below nature. It is the last gasping fury of romanticism as formulated by the German mind and coloured by a century of revolt from things as they are. It is the essence of pure poetry proclaimed by Poe and adopted by Baudelaire, released now from the clinging remnants of conscience and reason. *Surréalisme* is no more than symbolism come to its own.

Before trying to get at the final significance of this evolution, which M. Raymond has analyzed so adroitly, yet so far as principles are concerned so uncritically, we must first take account of the interpretation of its more immediate source on the Freudian hypothesis as expounded, *e.g.*, by Dr. René Laforgue in *L'Echec de Baudelaire*. Now the work of Dr. Laforgue I should describe as an arbitrary mixture of insight and baseless theory, of critical acumen and pseudo-science. To illustrate what I mean by this, I would refer to a passage on page 158:

Let us not forget that Baudelaire always refused to follow any profession. He wished to remain free at any price, though by doing so he must resign himself to be only king of a desert. For him evolution, growth, of any sort, was equivalent to an act of infidelity. To understand how completely the bourgeois life could mean for him something infamous, it is sufficient to consider his family situation. To succeed signified for him the capability of realizing an honest career (*une vie honnête*), like that of his stepfather, General Aupick. Such a life implied the duty of succeeding a father with whom he should identify himself, and whose place he should in some manner supplant. This rivalry of the son with his father,—we know how Baudelaire liquidated it so as not to feel guilty of desiring the death of his father. Yet he had desired just this, and had, so to speak, provoked it in his thoughts.

Now, as we shall see, the desire of freedom at any cost was fundamental to Baudelaire's whole career as a man and as an artist, but Dr. Laforgue immediately connects this with the so-called Oedipus complex of Freud, and the bulk of his book is directed to establishing this source of Baudelaire's psychological vagaries by voluminous citations from the author's works and letters and intimate journals. We may assume that Dr. Laforgue has collected all the available evidence for his thesis (I have not thought it necessary to hunt through the documents for any omission), and with this striking result: there is not a single sentence in all this mass of quotations which justifies his theory. That Baudelaire was in a sense a "mother's boy"; that he was constitutionally as child and man unfitted to face the actualities of life; that he was by instinct and habit driven to seek some escape from the world; and that as child and man he found refuge in the protective love of his mother, and rebelled bitterly when that protection was partly withdrawn by his mother's second marriage – all this is abundantly shown by Dr. Laforgue's documents.

It is clear enough also that Baudelaire was dominated to an abnormal degree by sex, and that the perversions of that domination can be connected with his inability to face the normal realities of life, which, if you choose, you may call an "inferiority complex"; but for the thesis that all this sprang from a sexual attraction as an infant to his mother, for this, I repeat, there is not an iota of evidence. Dr. Laforgue's Freudianism is bare theory with not the slightest basis in known facts; it is pseudo-science in the most blatant form.

And what may be called the accessories of this theory are, if anything, more preposterously fantastical. On page 202 Dr. Laforgue has an explanation of the (supposed) fact that Baudelaire's eye became at the last a veritable sexual organ enabling the artist, as a non-participating spectator, to realize the most extraordinary emotions of man and woman; this he derives from *l'acte sexuel (le coït des parents) auquel il aurait assisté dans son enfance*. To all which common sense can only reply that it is a more than dubious hypothesis to suppose that such an infantile experience would have such an effect, and that it is bare hypothesis, if not ugly disregard of truth, to assume as fact that Baudelaire ever had such an experience. But the climax is reached on pages 164 ff. Here Dr. Laforgue quotes from one of Baudelaire's letters the recollection of a day when he had driven in a fiacre with his mother who had just come from a *maison de santé*. This event the critic interprets quite arbitrarily as referring to the memory *d'une fausse couche ou de quelque chose d'analogue* (note the beautiful ambiguity) *qui l'aurait frappé et intrigué* in his early infancy, and then from this unbased supposition derives the poet's life-long *hantise du sang, de la mort et de la volupté*, and the whole orientation of his tastes.

This, I maintain, is unwarranted conjecture dressed in the imposing garb of pseudo-science, and I believe the unmitigated Freudianism exploited by Dr. Laforgue (his book is of 1931) has been repudiated by the more intelligent psycho-analysts of the present day – if intelligent is not too strong a word. But there is an element of truth in such a theory, which explains why it is still the psychology of the mob, whatever may be the momentary attitude of professional psychologists. No sensible man will deny, or ever has denied, the enormously important factor of sex in the conduct and character of men. So far the Freudian is on safe ground. His error is in deriving this impulse and giving it a peculiar twist from the hypothetical experience of the child in relation to his or her parents. And from this error, which has the plausibility of false simplification dear to the unintelligent, flows a theory rather philosophic or ethical than scientific – the supposition that the sexual impulse as it is formed in the unconscious experience of the child is the basis of nature, and that any conscious inhibition of it is unnatural and consequently deleterious. I shall never forget a Sunday afternoon not many years ago when, marooned in a New York club with a prominent physician, I listened to a series of tales exhibiting the hideous and almost incredible effects of this belief, got of course at second or third hand, among the idle rich women of "Fifth Avenue".

The first step towards a comprehension of Baudelaire and of the literary movement starting from symbolism is to distinguish between the falsehood and truth of a Dr. Laforgue, and to lay bare the motives that lie even deeper than sex and are the real springs of individual and group psychology. Here we have the assistance of the long line of books by Baron Ernest Seillière, and particularly, for our purpose, his study of *Baudelaire*, in which he has analyzed and applied these motives with indefatigable industry. Seillière, as ought to be well known by this time, finds two main impulses which have always been at work in the human soul, but have become prevalent in society since the days of Rousseau. These he designates as imperialism and mysticism. By the former he means – what Hobbes long before Rousseau had formulated from his reading of antiquity – the lust for power, and ever more power, the *libido dominandi.* But this common human instinct becomes mystical when reinforced by a belief that the lust of domination is corroborated and sanctified by the ultimate forces shaping our destiny. In its last stage mysticism takes the form of identifying the soul as an individual entity with the whole of ultimate reality. The inevitable and ruinous outcome of such a creed, however unformulated and half-conscious it may remain, is to let loose the whims or passions of the individual Ego, to dissolve the transmitted conventions acquired by the race from long experience, to relax the inhibiting control of reason, and to give as it were a divine sanction to the passing moods and desires of the "soul". With all this Seillière is careful to distinguish between such a false exaltation of the individual and the very contrary state of Christian mysticism as governed by humility and by a true pessimism born of the conviction of original sin.

In Baron Seillière's schematization this mystical imperialism, or imperial mysticism, falls into a variety of species as one or another mood of the Ego usurps the field. It is naturalistic when the interest in nature leads to identification of the Self with the visible world of phenomena as the ultimate reality; passional when the *libido sentiendi*, particularly in the form of sex, prevails, and the lust of the flesh is decked out with all the radiance of a divine influx, or inspiration; sociological when a special group presumes to speak for society as a whole, and the *volonté générale* is identified with the will of God – "the people can do no wrong"; aesthetic when beauty, set up as an ideal independent of the True and the Good, opens a field in which the creative imagination is omnipotent with the resulting theory of art for art's sake; metaphysical when the Ego is rationalized as an absolutely autonomous entity.

Now it will be clear that in the realm of modern French poetry, which is our present concern, the last two of these forms of romantic exaltation, the aesthetic and the metaphysical, are of the essence, so to speak, of the movement, and that the other species of mysticism – naturalistic, passional, and sociological – furnish the material employed by the poet in grasping at the sense of power in self-expression. And we can understand why these poets looked to Poe's theory of art as the source, or one of the sources, of aesthetic mysticism, and to Whitman's "barbaric yawp", though less definitely, as an incentive to metaphysical mysticism. But practically, as we see these two guiding principles brought together in the efflorescence of symbolism and *surréalisme*, it is not easy to see which of them is primary and which secondary. In other words, does the poet's conceit of his art, as a product of his pure creativity, lead to a sense of himself as an autonomous entity, or does that metaphysical conception of the self lead to a sense of the autonomy of art? That is a problem not easily solved. Indeed this ambiguity of order inevitably raises the question whether there may not be a single psychological principle which lies behind them both, and of which they are both but different phases. And it seems to me that a closer consideration of the movement we are studying suggests that there is such a principle and that it may be expressed in a single phrase: *the lust of irresponsibility*. Just that, a rebellious hatred of responsibility to any overlordship of law or personal sovereignty, would appear to be the essence of Seillière's imperialism, rather than the lust of dominating others in the Hobbesian sense of the word. And that, equally, would account for the setting-up of art as a field in which the poet can escape the prosaic demands of life. I believe I am right in holding this lust of irresponsibility, which may of course easily pass into the lust of domination, to be one of the primary and universal instincts of human nature, though in most men it is more or less concealed by imbecility of will, or is held in check by the traditional conventions of society. In Mr. C. S. Lewis's wise and witty allegory of modern life, under the title of *The Pilgrim's Regress*, there is a chapter (the sixth of Book VIII) in which this lust of irresponsibility, as I would call it, is expounded theologically, somewhat in the manner of Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven*, as flight from God and as the horror of being overtaken by a Being to whom all the secret impulses of the heart are bare:

> All things said one word: CAUGHT—Caught into slavery again, to walk warily and on sufferance all his days, never to be alone; never the master of his own soul, to have no privacy, no corner whereof you could say to the whole universe: This is my own, here I can do as I please. Under that universal and inspecting gaze, John cowered like some small animal caught up in a giant's hands and held beneath a magnifying glass.

Mr. Lewis is writing an apologue of the compulsory "regress" of a soul back to the Law-Giver from whom it had fled for liberty; but the revolt of his hero is not unlike the Hindu's horror of the impersonal law of Karma.

What I find then in Baudelaire, and my finding is amply confirmed by the masterly study of Baron Seillière, is exactly such a passion of autonomy. Most clearly and directly this shows itself in his tenacious grasp of Poe's theory of pure art, and somewhat less clearly, though not less directly, in his exaltation of the artist, *i.e.*, himself, in face of the restrictions and decencies of bourgeois convention as personified for him in his stepfather. All this is coloured and clouded no doubt by abnormal sexuality; but the lust of irresponsibility, I would maintain, is primary. The only means of attaining such a liberation is through valiant denial of any supernatural reality which can hold him to judgement. And the consequence – for the soul of man, to parody the words of St. Augustine, is unquiet until it finds rest in some ultimate reality – the consequence is that, having repudiated any authority from above the plane of conventional human nature he will grope for some reality below that plane. What lends a peculiar note to Baudelaire's poetry and distinguishes it from the types that follow is the fact that, however fiercely he may protest against it in language, emotionally he is unable to throw off the feeling of responsibility. This substratum of nature, this dark abyss of the irrational subconscious out of which emerges the stream of fantastic images and perverted desires, is the reality, but in the shadow of the supernatural, defied yet never obliterated from his conscience it is the devil's kingdom of *evil*. Hence the poet's homage to its dark power will take the form of diabolism, and in his soul the spirit of revolt will retain some parody of the Christian hue of sin under the masque of blasphemy. These are not fancies: his diabolism and blasphemy are the romantic substitute for acknowledged responsibility; they give to Baudelaire's tortured imagination a note of orthodoxy that connects him, in his despite one might say, with the great and serious tradition of art. Beside him the poets of the succeeding generation appear as triflers or at the best as naughty children.

For what one sees in the course from symbolism to *surréalisme*, through all the sporadic reactions which in fact only make the main line of development more pronounced, is the Baudelairian lust of liberation divesting itself of any remnant of the hated responsibility to the supernatural and revelling in the irresponsibility of the infranatural, with less and less sense of evil connected with this lower reality and indeed, in its more characteristic moments, with no distinction between good and evil. The recognized philosopher of the movement is Paul Valéry. In his lucid pages, if anywhere, *le prestige d'être soi* rises to the aerial heights of a metaphysical theorem. The proper aim of the intelligent man (*l'homme de l'esprit*) is to distinguish himself from everything which in *le moi* is not pure consciousness. What is a thought or a specific sentiment but a sensation prolonged? What is any felt desire, what are all the phenomena of the inner life, in the sight of *l'esprit*, but intrusions into consciousness from the outer world? things which are born and die, suffer change, are substituted one for the other, to the Ego an unmeaning flux from which pure mind must separate itself by a process of continual exhaustion? So it is that to attain to absolute consciousness of self the obligation arises to detach one's self from nature and life, to deny responsibility to anything whatsoever. And so it is that at the end of this intellectual asceticism the *moi pur* as it were moults itself into a nameless power, a cosmic point in the vast vacuity; or, as M. Valéry expresses it, the man of intelligence (*l'homme de l'esprit*) must at the last reduce himself scientifically to be nothing whatsoever.

That is the ideal. But what of the world outside of pure contentless consciousness, with its insistent attacks and appeals? In spite of his spiritual metaphysic the poet is a man tenderly attached to his soul and body, drawn by them like Narcissus leaning over the water, tempted by this life so strange and incomprehensible, by these adorable colours thrown by life over the sunset of consciousness, and coming one knows not whence; still he is seduced by the illusion of living and takes pleasure in the seduction, though not without regret for the ideal of absolute disdain and perfect vacuity – such is the poet, and so M. Valéry appears to us. In the end "nothing exists save two distinct presences, two incommensurable natures; there are only two adversaries who watch each other and do not understand", states of being – or of non-being? one knows not which. In such a split and self-destructive universe the soul will fight for its existence by its own pure creativity through the instrument of words. "The world of poetry is essentially closed and complete in itself, being purely the system of the ornaments and accidents of language." So the soul, drawing back from the annihilation of pure egotism, will build about itself a world of its own out of hints and shreds of actuality. At any price it has escaped responsibility.

Something of this ideal of pure poesy is common to all the writers for whom Valéry speaks as the recognized philosopher; and it is fair to say that at times they do evoke a strange haunting beauty caught in the irrational enchantment of words. But these children of symbolism were men as well as poets, and could not escape their destiny; their boasted freedom, deep down in their hearts they know to be a sham. It is not a joyous band, these singers of irresponsibility – I speak of those in the main line of advance, not of those on the outskirts, and obviously not of those whose only relation to the movement is one of opposition. Beneath the exultations of license and the frivolities of conceit, he who listens can hear, deep down, the rumbling note of doubt and defeat and despair.

Finally I would like to quote again from Mr. C. S. Lewis. In the nineteenth volume of *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, he has a paper on *The Personal Heresy in Criticism* all of which bears on the problem I have been discussing. It closes with this paragraph:

> Surely the dilemma is plain. Either there is significance in the whole process of things as well as in human activity, or there is no significance in human activity itself. It is an idle dream, at once cowardly and arrogant, that we can withdraw the human soul, as a mere epiphenomenon, from a universe of idiotic force, and yet hope, after that, to find for her some *faubourg* where she can keep a mock court in exile. You cannot have it both ways. If the world is meaningless, then so are we; if we mean something, we do not mean alone. Embrace either alternative, and you are free of the personal heresy.

The Jacobin Heresy

Ross J. S. Hoffman

INTENSIVE study of the great Revolution by which France and, in good time, much of the Western world was made anew, has been unceasingly in progress since the establishment of the present French Republic, and especially since Taine, in the early and disheartening days of the Republic, published his *Origines de la France contemporaine*. The sources have been dug to light, catalogued, and criticized; from studying the dramatic Parisian events scholars have turned to ascertaining what the Revolution did in the provinces and beyond the frontiers of France; economic and sociological history has supplemented the political account; religious and psychological factors also have been explored, at least in part. Monograph studies have piled high while new syntheses continue to be written, and although the specialist doubtless will say (as he always does say) that much work yet remains to be done, it seems quite unlikely that future research can bring to light anything to alter the main lines of the picture that now may be seen. Yet divergent interpretations are still maintained, and there is still no agreement among historical scholars as to what was the essential nature of that which Hilaire Belloc once called "the Revolutionary Thing".

Those words, of course, to many minds are mystic or meaningless: a mere name for an abstraction that eludes the mind. For how can the Revolution be thought of as a "thing"? It was nothing concrete and tangible, but a process of spectacular change, a succession of events adding up to make one great event which left the human society wherein it happened a very changed society. Some force was at work, striving against a set of opposing or favouring circumstances, now winning its way, now meeting successful resistance; and that force was the will of men to change the order of their affairs. There was an ideal vision before their eyes, a creed upon their lips, a doctrine in their minds; and that is what is meant by "the Revolutionary Thing". It was man willing to act in pursuit of a vision and in allegiance to a creed; this it was that sought to make a new France, and were it not so the old France could not but have gone on down its rotting way to ruin. Of course the whole story of the revolutionary era is not the story of that thing, for other and different forces also were at work. There was corruption, there was cruelty, there was selfish ambition, madness, misunderstanding and fear; these also motivated the will of men and helped to make that complex of events called the French Revolution. But the men who acted from such common human motives did not make "the Revolutionary Thing". Men so moved are present at all times in all societies, and in any revolution they will affect importantly the course of events; they will aid the cause for base and selfish ends, or they will oppose it, or betray it; they will constrict its action or give it bad direction; but they will not make it, will not be one with that which seeks to right the world.

Now it is the high merit of Professor Crane Brinton's recent volume on Europe in the age of the French Revolution* that it helps make clear a right concept of "the Revolutionary Thing": helps, I say – it does no more, for all that it comes near to being a really brilliant study. Professor Brinton displays an intelligence which in spite of its cynical scepticism is really piercing, and his judgements are admirably independent. Nor is he content merely to relate events, but seeks also to explain and define; and if he is not always successful in this effort he is none the less instructive for failing. The same marks of high excellence that characterized his volume on the Jacobins issued five years ago appear in this larger and more comprehensive book.

Certainly he is to be commended warmly for breaking boldly with that "official" school of historians founded by the late Alphonse Aulard and now divided in allegiance between Aulard and his rebellious disciple, the late Albert Mathiez; which split "follows the division in French party politics between the *radicaux-socialistes* and the socialists and communists". The founder of this school was a typical man of the bourgeois Third Republic, a patriotic nationalist but narrow in his sympathies and strongly anti-Catholic. He was not in any sense a great historian, but like, say, G. G. Coulton or H. C. Lea, one of those second-rate historians who have been extremely able scholars, critical of their sources, accurate and full in their documentation. Aulard came of age as historical study was becoming "scientific" with its own special technique for the critical use of sources, and his work

* A DECADE OF REVOLUTION *by Crane Brinton* (HARPER'S. 330 pp. $3.75).

was based strictly upon contemporary records; hence his distrust of memoirs and dislike of interpretive generalizations; hence the enormous authority still attaching to his name among the older American scholars of today. Aulard, of course, no more than any other man, could put historical data in intelligible order without venturing to select, generalize, interpret, and explain; but whenever he did so he was feeble. Witness for example his attempt to explain the Terror as a mere government of national defence caused by the pressure of foreign and domestic war. It was this combination in Aulard of reluctance to explain, with feebleness when trying to explain, that led to Mathiez's revolt, although the latter was also a professional historian of rigorous scholarly training. The younger man took a proletarian rather than a bourgeois-liberal viewpoint, accepted the Marxist interpretation of history, and gave a class-struggle version of the Terror. That brought the split with Aulard, although superficially the difference between master and student was their opposing judgements on Danton and Robespierre.

Now in saying that Brinton breaks with Aulard and Mathiez I do not mean that he does not greatly admire their solid learning, nor that he does not draw heavily upon their findings. I mean rather that he does not accept their explanations, and the main point of departure is the explanation of the Jacobin Terror. The search for that Professor Brinton carries far beyond Aulard, and does not rest with Mathiez's Marxian explanation, although he recognizes it as part of a much larger explanation. "The men who made the Terror", he says, "were not thinking in terms of economics, were not even, incredible though it may seem, lusting in terms of economics." There was indeed a great deal more in the picture of the Terror than Marxist eyes can ever see.

> Thanks [writes Brinton] to the work of Aulard and his followers [it] contains an emphatic, indeed overwhelming background of foreign and civil war; thanks to Mathiez, it has been completed with a touch of the class struggle. To drop the metaphor: into the historical situation known as the Terror there went the desperate necessities of men who wage war in some measure not of their choice; there went the hatred of the poor for the rich, of the failure for the success; there went the relatively simple and eternal desire of men to rule other men; there went the desire of over-educated and inexperienced men to realize the paper Utopias of eighteenth-century thought; and there went the religious fanaticism of men borne in a frenzy of hope beyond the petty decencies of common sense. *But omit a single one of these elements and you no longer have the Terror.* Modern historiography, with its pseudo-scientific bias, has emphasized the material circumstances, the economic motive, anything but the deliberate volition of men whose interests, ambitions, and ideas were in themselves varied and unpredictable compounds.

There you have it: "the volition of men", and of men who were not even "lusting in terms of economics"! But what was the great thing they wanted? What stirred in them that frenzied will, that fierce intolerance which leads men by no means evil to kill? I have called it a creed and a vision, and Professor Brinton names it well the "religion of Jacobinism", which was an almost apocalyptic faith in the possibility – nay, the certainty – of a complete transformation of human society, a swift escape from corruption and pain to perfection and felicity. Man was to attain full realization for his perfectible nature through destruction of old tyrannies and superstitions; an age was to be opened when, in Condorcet's words, "the human race, freed from all its fetters, withdrawn from the empire of chance as from that of the enemies of Progress, would walk with firm and assured step in the way of truth, of virtue and of happiness". A generation of men had lost faith in the God of Christian orthodoxy, but they affirmed a new faith: the faith of Rousseau's Savoyard vicar; faith in man raised to grace anew by baptism in the waters of a deified nature. It is ever the mark of a new religion that the devout are determined to create a new kind of man, and that was the avowed aim of the Jacobin believers. "You must entirely refashion a people whom you wish to make free," proclaimed the Committee of Public Safety, "destroy its prejudices, alter its habits, limit its necessities, root up its vices, purify its desires." Jacobinism was the religious creed of men militantly bent on reaching "the heavenly city of the eighteenth-century philosophers", and it is the major merit of Professor Brinton's book that it recognizes this fact.

> The devotional language of the Jacobins [he points out], their frequent accesses of collective emotion, their conviction of righteousness, their assurance that their opponents are sinners, direct agents of the devil, their intolerance, their desire for martyrdom, their total want of humour—all these are unmistakable signs of the theological temperament. It is possible to build up from the scattered records of what these Jacobins said and did a fairly systematic scheme of values cast into a form closely

parallel to traditional Christianity. Mankind is divided into the saved and the damned. Salvation is achieved by grace. Grace is the free gift of a benign God. . . . The saved are at eternal war with the damned. The regeneration of the race is ultimately possible, but can be achieved only by the conversion of the damned, or what is much more in accord with Calvinistic and Robespierrean theology, by their extermination.

Now these are the words of a discerning historian, and I find it not a little puzzling that the man who wrote them could not see a little further than apparently he has seen. I mean that the man who can see that Jacobinism was a religion ought also to see that the thing can be even better named by calling it a Christian heresy. For whence came this new creed but from the old common traditions of Christendom? What could Liberty, Equality, Fraternity have meant to men had men not been heir to a tradition of free will, equality before God, and a corporate bond of human fellowship? The old society had been very disloyal to that tradition and therefore men arose to accuse it; but their accusation was really an appeal to the very tradition that had been betrayed. These men revolted against a religion which they adjudged to be corrupt superstition, but they actually took their stand for values which it had been the glory of that religion to affirm. And that is the way it has ever been with the great Christian heresies. In an age of religious decline some men will seize upon the neglected values, affirm them anew, confront the priests with their condemnation, and by mistaking the right position of the neglected values in the whole scheme of values use them to fashion a heresy. That is what

Luther did with faith in divine mercy, and what Calvin did with faith in divine omnipotent justice. It is also what the Jacobins did with Christian doctrines respecting freedom, social justice, and human rights. They abandoned the doctrine of the Fall and the Redemption, but with what was left of Christianity they made a new creed with a new core of emphasis. Mr. Chesterton put it rightly when he said:

> What really happened was this: that the men of the eighteenth century, many of them in a just impatience with corrupt and cynical priests, turned on those priests and said in effect, "Well, I suppose you call yourselves Christians; so you can't actually *deny* that men are brothers or that it is our duty to help the poor." The very confidence of their challenge, the very ringing note in the revolutionary voice, came from the fact that the Christian reactionaries were in a false position as Christians. The democratic demand won because it seemed unanswerable.

Now a new religion never seems unanswerable, and right here you have the reason why this thing was rather a heresy than a new religion, why it gained such a mighty success: it contained very precious and familiar old truths. It is of course the mark of every heresy that it has some content of the old truth; which content is the secret of its driving force. All the great heresies have been strong exactly in the measure that they have been orthodox; all have lived only on inherited capital; which is the reason why they never live to witness the survival of the old tradition whence they spring. The Jacobin heresy has been no exception to this rule, as the rather sadly cynical Brinton unwittingly shows us. "That strange force which gives life to mere words", he tells us, "has today pretty well gone from Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." The mood has gone and the old revolutionary faith in man is dying away; that creed of confident hope now seems hollowly unreal, memorial to another human failure. Yet the orthodoxy that affirmed the revolutionary truths not as a mere mood, or sentiment, or hope, but as a doctrine – as an integral part of one larger body of doctrine – is not dead and is not stale; rather it seems today to be strangely and freshly alive.

If Professor Brinton had recognized the Jacobin creed as a Christian heresy I do not think he would have been puzzled, as he evidently has been, over the "paradox that, in spite of the melodramatic horrors of events in France, the French Revolution has *in the long run* proved even more revolutionary in its effects on other countries than in its effects on France". In this connection, he makes the point (and quite correctly) that the nineteenth- and twentieth-century socialist movement is a derivation from Jacobinism. "The one", he says, "is the direct outgrowth of the other"; and this being true, he is puzzled to account for the fact that "the French Revolution, itself in so many ways the product of the modern spirit of unrest and experiment, helped to perpetuate in France a relatively stationary and balanced rural economy". Why, in other words, have the people who went so frantically Jacobin been able to resist that which evolved straight out of Jacobinism? I think the answer should be easy to give. It is simply that France kept what was orthodox in Jacobinism and wisely let the rest of it go. The traditional life of her society being revived and strengthened, she was able to excrete what was evil or mad in the revolutionary doctrines – enough so at least to maintain a fair measure of social well-being. There has been little socialism in France because the driving force and genuine value in the triumphant Jacobin revolution was the traditional social morality of Christian men; wherever this is restored socialism sounds its bird-call in vain. Socialism is certainly a continuation of Jacobinism – a continuation in corruption and error; but what if Jacobinism seek absolution of its sins and return to that from whence it sprang and where alone it is at home and at peace? That is what happened in France, and that is the explanation of Professor Brinton's paradox.

I said above that I found it hard to understand how this discerning historian could see so clearly the nature of Jacobinism and yet not recognize the thing for what in reality it was. The solution of that puzzle, however, is not withheld, but actually given in Professor Brinton's concluding chapter. It is this: that we can hardly be much astonished by a historian's failure to see a thing rightly in the past when he cannot see the same thing in the present, even though it be under his very nose! So far is this writer from a grasp on traditional Christian orthodoxy that he tells us it is now dead, that the French Revolution killed it! Here is his report of this startling news:

> The French Revolution did destroy, as completely as it can be destroyed, the nexus of loyalties which had once made the old régime an authority. It might be more accurate to say that the French Revolution merely made evident to all a work of destruction begun long before, but the fact of that destruction was undeniable in 1799. Frenchmen had ceased to feel the authority . . . of the

> God of St. Paul, St. Louis, and even Louis XIV. We have all of us today been so much affected by this abandonment of the Christian God . . . that only by a difficult leap of the imagination can we live again even for a moment in the old world of ideas. But in this old world men really did believe . . . that life on this earth is a fleeting transition to eternity, that such a life is inevitably one of misery, that, however, there are rigid rules of conduct for such a life, conformity with which will be rewarded with eternal bliss, disobedience of which will be punished by eternal damnation. *Remnants of such ideas still exist among us, but recognizably as remnants, not as parts of a completely unified whole.* [Italics mine.]

Now grasp the full import of this amazing passage: the Christian religion was destroyed, and the God of the New Testament (God of St. Paul, St. Louis, and Louis XIV) has faded from men's minds; it is even hard to imagine what it was for men to live in the old orthodoxy; nothing of it all is left but remnants. This Harvard professor has – I regret the hard saying – the unwitting impudence to deny the existence, or at least the significant existence of a few hundred million orthodox Christians in the world in which he himself also lives. If he does not deny their significant existence, then his offence is even more grave: he denies that they actually believe what they profess to believe. These hundreds of millions daily proclaim their Credo in the whole organic body of faith from the Trinity to the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, but Professor Brinton tells them that they do not mean it, and that in so far as they believe any of this at all they cling weakly to but a few remnants. In such fashion does an American university professor wave away the very existence of the Christian faith in an age of almost unparalleled missionary activity, an age which is witnessing the greatest revival of orthodoxy since the Counter-Reformation. For an adequate parallel to this insulated unawareness of what goes on amongst men, one would have to search out some simple orthodox peasant who had never heard of the irreligion of our time, and who, being told of it, found it quite impossible to believe.

Professor Brinton's observations on the passing of the Christian faith may well be noted as a prize exhibit of a kind of intellectual blindness not infrequently encountered among even quite learned men who are cut loose from the traditional religion of our civilization. For them the thing is so dead that even when it marches before their eyes they can only see as one who does not see. The thing is dead, and only a miracle could raise it, but they do not believe in miracles; what appears is not the thing itself, but the ghost of the thing, and they do not believe in ghosts. Hence are they driven to denying the evidence of their senses, to affirming what is patently false. I do not say that this intellectual blindness is a necessary consequence of religious scepticism; that would be grossly unjust to many who are steeped in the traditions of our true civilization yet have not the gift of Christian faith. But I do say that there is a dangerous risk in assuming that thing to be finally dead which has so often confounded its enemies by rising from the grave. Professor Brinton's book, in many ways a study of great brilliance, is just one more proof that the first requisite to an understanding of Europe is a true knowledge of that religion by which Europe was made.

REVIEWS

Literature and the History of Ideas*

WHAT do students study when they study literature? Why should literature be studied? Whether these seem exciting to every reader or not, they are important questions; yet there is no agreed answer to them with which scholars and teachers can face the world. The questions have importance, of course, because literature remains still, despite all changes, the principal avenue to education for a very large number of young people; because, too, a vast deal of energy is expended on this study by mature men and women as well as by youngsters, a not inconsiderable number of the former making it their life's work. Surely there ought, then, to be an aim in view, which might enable the student of literature to give an account of himself before society. In general it can be said that we know very well what men of science are devoted to, and why they think the several sciences, more or less exact, are important for purposes of education. But who knows what the student of literature is devoted to, or why after all anyone should continue to regard the study of literature as a valuable means of education?

* PRIMITIVISM AND THE IDEA OF PROGRESS in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century *by Lois Whitney* (JOHNS HOPKINS PRESS. 343 pp. $2.75).
THE INTELLECTUAL MILIEU OF JOHN DRYDEN: Studies in Some Aspects of Seventeenth-Century Thought *by Louis I. Bredvold* (UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS. 189 pp. $2.50).

Everybody can think immediately of several ends at which scholars aim – not one of which can stand as the object of the study of literature. There are, for example, beings – all things considered, a curiously large number of beings – who draw delight from the study of language; but this study obviously is one thing, and the study of literature another. For the student of literature the philologers can at best provide useful instruments. And this also is true of bibliographers, of commentators, and of the editors and printers of authentic texts. Indeed, it is true too of the manufacturers of good paper; and it is the easier to be duly grateful to them because they do not give themselves the airs that philologers and bibliographers and editors habitually do.

But there is another kind of scholar who may seem to come nearer the mark. Literature, as we mostly use the word today, denotes an art, and through its study the scholars now in question attempt to discover principles of literary art in prose and verse; and so hope to promote, if not the making of new literature, at least the intelligent appreciation of that which we have. These attempts, however, have languished in recent years, as artists have successfully become laws unto themselves; and the "principles", besides, or rules, in so far as we still have any of them, pertain only to the form taken by a piece of literature, while the things said in a poem or novel or play or essay are either dismissed by artists and professorial hangers-on as irrelevant from the artistic point of view or accepted impartially, and blindly, as matter for "historical explanation".

Now problems of form are not unimportant; none of the activities here mentioned is unimportant. If literature itself is sufficiently important to reward the most painstaking study, and has value enough of a kind to make it a really useful avenue to education, all scholarly activity observable is useful for these purposes. Nevertheless, it is a fact that scholars have more and more tended to *assume* the vital importance of literature without bothering to understand it, and have found themselves as a consequence so greatly at a loss, not only for methods of serious study, but for *aims*, that they have tried to force the student of literature into the bandwagon of exact science, loudly insisting that nothing within the field of literature should be studied save that which proved amenable to the methods of science. This accounts for an odd state of affairs, for the way in which scholars are piling up instruments, *means* of study, till they threaten veritably to engulf us, without putting them to any significant use. It accounts too, since, despite things one occasionally hears, people can teach only what they know, for the way in which innocent youngsters are forced into studies having no meaning or use unless they also are intending to become professional bibliographers or commentators or antiquarians or philologers.

And the net result is that scholars forcibly convey the impression that they are wandering round and round their subject without knowing how to get into it, and, what is more, without wanting to get into it. Thus they have themselves promoted a widespread deep feeling of dissatisfaction with their bustling activity, which seems to empty literature of significance and value while concentrating attention upon external matters of secondary or trifling import. This dissatisfaction is fully justified, however wrongheaded some expressions of it may be; and it has fathered one attempt at reform which is assuming the proportions of a revolutionary movement, and which promises so well that it deserves recognition, understanding, and, it may be, serious criticism.

The two books under review are fruits of this movement, and enable us to see something of what can be expected from it, and also a danger to which it is exposed and which it must avoid if it is not to end in a fiasco. The movement itself has arisen properly from the conviction that literature is not a "pure" art but a significant art having a vital relation to life, and that it can and should be studied as an expression of life from which we can best learn, speaking broadly, the meaning of our common humanity in its fullest development. Literature has never been, is not, and, for better or for worse, can never be simply a photographic reflection of life. As an art it unescapably interprets life, directly or by implication, in re-creating it. Hence there is always present — deeply and darkly imbedded it may be, but, still, actively present — in literature of whatsoever kind a hard core or backbone of philosophical ideas. And it is this central characteristic of literature which gives it importance and makes it a uniquely valuable means of liberal education. The revolutionary movement under discussion, moreover, is simply a determined effort to act in accordance with this fact, to study and teach literature in close relation with philosophical ideas and their vicissitudes. Many students, to be sure, have long been concerned with the history of thought and with its critical presentation. What is new and, indeed, nothing less than revolutionary is the attempt to bring philosophical ideas, in the broadest sense of the term, and literature together, for the light each may shed on the other.

How salutary and valuable this new orientation of literary studies may be one can learn better from Professor Bredvold's *Intellectual Milieu of John Dryden* than from Miss Whitney's study of the fortunes of the doctrine of primitivism and of the doctrine of progress as they are reflected in eighteenth-century literature. Professor Bredvold's book is the more modest of the two in plan and method, and it has the advantage of being directed to a single definite purpose – the delineation of the intellectual background of Dryden's poetry. Into much of this poetry, of course, philosophical ideas directly and obviously enter, so that a clearer instance of the need for such help as Professor Bredvold gives could scarcely have been found; and it is not too much to say that he has once and for all proved the childish superficiality and sterility of any comprehensive study of Dryden which does not follow the lines he has marked out. Yet, amazingly enough, work so essential as Professor Bredvold's for the study of a great man of letters has been left practically undone till the present time, with the consequence that his is a pioneer's attempt, exhibiting some of the defects inevitable in a first rough exploration.

The work he has done is, as Professor Bredvold knows, far from complete, though it is solid and trustworthy as far as it goes, save perhaps in the treatment of Hobbes and in a few other quite incidental pronouncements, such as Professor Bredvold's extreme and undiscriminating condemnation of Francis Osborne. The book is, furthermore, somewhat damaged by the author's vacillation between an original purpose to write directly about Dryden and a later perception that this undertaking could not be intelligently prosecuted without the preliminary studies now published. This accounts for certain unnecessary and unfortunate efforts to save Dryden's face by recourse to a too simple psychology, and also for quite unsatisfactory suggestions concerning the actual relations between Dryden's own work and the currents of thought disentangled and soundly explained by Professor Bredvold. Such needed warnings or strictures as these, however, are of little importance in comparison with the positive value of the author's achievement. The present reviewer can imagine few books in which a writer could feel more solid satisfaction or for which students of English literature should feel more grateful. He would be unable to say of many other learned treatises, too, what he said of this one when he laid it down: that he heartily wished it had been longer.

But while Professor Bredvold's masterly, lucid, and unpretentious expositions make one wish that he had written more, Miss Whitney's *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress*, alas, makes one wish just as strongly that she had written less – and had written less ambitiously and less superciliously. Professor Lovejoy in a brief introduction commends especially her method of presentation, which is in fact his own method; and certainly no one would wish to quarrel with his contention that "in the history of ideas,

ideas should be the units dealt with", not persons and not their complete metaphysical "systems". Nevertheless, the ideas Professor Lovejoy speaks of and Miss Whitney treats are not the separable, hard, objective entities they seem to imagine, under the delusion that something like "science" is attainable in human history.

What Miss Whitney achieves is not without value. One can learn a little from her book, concerning the vicissitudes of the doctrines she is concerned with, which students of eighteenth-century literature ought to keep in mind. But her analytic treatment is at once cumbersome, overformal, and superficial, and in the end makes for confusion, not for enlightenment. The most wonderful example is her handling of Burke, where plain stupidity or invincible ignorance could not have served her worse than her impressively recommended "method". The gravest defect of *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress*, however, promoted by too heavy a dose of pseudo-scientific "method", is a lofty air of detachment pervading the whole book. Ideas are dealt with much as if the author were an entomologist unconcernedly placing insect-specimens in a row. If no single living issue is involved, if analysis does not serve the end of critical judgement, but is only to be used for bringing things – any things, indifferently – to light, then we have in the study of ideas merely a new antiquarianism. "Bringing things to light, alone and of itself", wrote Bishop Butler, "is of no manner of use, any otherwise than as an entertainment or diversion." If the most promising and significant development in the field of scholarship in our time is not to be grasped by the dead hand of pedantry and thrown on the ash-heap, Miss Whitney's overgrown book should be studied chiefly as an illustration of the-way-not-to-do-it.

ROBERT SHAFER

The Historical Philosophy of Frederick Jackson Turner*

IN the early nineties, two young men, Woodrow Wilson and Frederick Jackson Turner, graduate students in the Adams Seminar at Johns Hopkins University, agreed that the frontier had been one of the most important factors in moulding American history. Henry Adams, McMaster, and Schouler who were publishing their histories at this time had already allotted an unorthodox space to the West; and certain writers on economic history, struck by the constant demand of the West from colonial days up until the populist movement for cheap money, free lands, and a greater share in representation, declared that the frontier had been of great influence. But the hypothesis that the frontier had been a major factor in American history was in 1890 only an hypothesis: its truth had not been tested.

The two young students began work to test the theory. Wilson's *Division and Reunion* and his larger history of the United States bore heavy marks of this purpose; but Wilson, after all, was more interested in the processes of government than in history and he left it to the patient, careful, and resourceful Turner to exploit and prove or disprove the rôle of the West. Turner devoted about twenty years in pursuit of this

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*THE UNITED STATES 1830-1850 *by Frederick Jackson Turner* (HOLT. 602 pp. $4.50).

idea – his first essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History", at once winning him nation-wide recognition.

Not all historians, of course, accepted Turner's interpretation – which was just as well, as Turner was destined (as this last book, *The United States 1830-1850*, posthumously published, and the book of essays published in 1932, *The Significance of Sections in American History*, show) to forge past the earlier thesis and arrive at the conclusion that sectionalism was the fundamental basis of American history. The earlier New England historians who had always treated of an oversimplified sectionalism between North and South were slow to accept Turner's philosophy of the frontier. In fact, one of Turner's later colleagues at Harvard is reported to have observed that nothing of importance had ever happened West of the Appalachians. However, the conservative Eastern historians were eventually won to Turner's interpretation, and it is asserted today that the only places where pure Turnerism is taught is in certain Eastern universities.

The frontier, according to the Turner interpretation, as originally propounded, was essentially equalitarian and democratic. Artificial distinctions of birth, education, wealth, and culture had less to do with determining a man's station than common sense, leadership, character, and personality. Again, the West with its rich and cheap lands offered what seemed to be a boundless sanctuary for the oppressed and unfortunate, for the restless and the adventurous, of the older communities both in the East and in Europe. The West, therefore, until the close of the frontier always acted as a strong bidder against the East and Europe for the labouring classes, and, to a considerable extent, forced a rise in wages and a betterment in working conditions in the industrial portions of America. It exerted a constant pressure upon older communities to liberalize their social and political institutions by draining off the lowly population to the frontier where liberty, equality, and fraternity were practices and not theories. The West also reacted upon the Eastern States in a more subtle fashion than by holding up the constant threat to take away its labouring population. The sons and daughters of the Atlantic fringe dwelling in the West conveyed their ideas back to old communities which they had left, and these communities slowly and unconsciously absorbed much of the frontier ideals.

Such in brief were Turner's main concepts of the rôle of the frontier in American history. But, as I have suggested, in the last and more mature years of his work he was to emphasize another basis of American history, namely, the importance of the sections and regions in determining culture, social and political attitudes, and economic life. From the very beginning, in fact, Turner's essays had fallen into a framework which was based upon the assumption of regional and sectional differentiation. In his essays on the various frontiers he takes careful stock of the physiographic nature of the area of which he is writing. Rivers, valleys, harbours, mountain chains, rainfall, temperature, and soils set natural boundaries to his particular frontiers. Another important element which emphasized regional or sectional differences he also noted in his earlier work, namely race. Indeed no historian has been more conscious than Turner of the importance of racial influence.

The sectional thesis is not an antithesis of Turner's early historical philosophy in which the frontier was of paramount importance. It seems to me, rather, that the last book in particular is a synthesis of Turner's historical philosophies in which the early philosophy is subordinated to the sectional interpretation. It may be, of course, that I am reading into Turner's last writings more than he intended. It may be that he saw clearly that both sectionalism and the frontier had been, up to the end of this period, 1850, fundamental factors in our history, and that he was unable to arrive at a synthesis. But there is no doubt that Turner finally realized that frontier conditions were transitory while regional and sectional factors were permanent elements and hence of more importance.

While Turner's later philosophy commits him to the sectional interpretation of history and thereby gives greater significance to that point of view, it must be pointed out, as in the case of the frontier, that he was not the first historian to chart that field and interpret history in terms of sections and regions. The work of William E. Dodd dates back over thirty years, and this has been Dodd's philosophy from the beginning. I have notes taken from Dodd's lectures about twenty years ago which deal most minutely with the study of the regions and sections. It is possible that Dodd's conception of history was influenced by the German geographical interpretation of history (Dodd was trained in the German seminars), or it may be that he saw the implications of Turner's early studies of the frontier, which invariably followed the regional pattern, before Turner saw them. Perhaps — and most likely — Dodd saw the realities of American history as Beard, Phillips, Bolton, and others did. However this may be, it is of marked importance that Turner accepted and developed in his own way the sectional interpretation of history.

Turner's philosophy of sectionalism as applied particularly to the period 1830-1850 is best summed up in his own words:

> Each section had its own interest and worked to make it effective in the entire United States. Within each section there were varied regions. . . . These regions limited sectional unanimity, especially in Presidential elections. At the same time, the existence of political parties extending into all sections, particularly after the formation of the Whigs in 1834, created nationalizing influences that usually worked like elastic bands, holding the sections together, but in years of special stress yielded to the sections' individual fundamental demands.
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> The American statesmen of the years between 1830 and 1850, at least, were, on the whole, representative of the sections from which they came, authentic exponents of these sections' fundamental traits and ideals; but they were more than this, for they had, also, to deal with the nation. The conditions of their rise from mere sectional ascendency was that they should be able to combine other sections with theirs in a common policy; to find bases on which to build up a country-wide following while still maintaining a hold upon their own people.

However, political leadership and political parties, while acting as elastic bands to hold the sections together, broke down in times of stress.

> When measures of importance arose, party lines usually gave way to sectional divisions. Even at such times, party

served as a moderating influence, forcing the adjustment and compromise between the sections in the policies of the leaders. Sectional divisions were clearly evident in the action of the committees in the shaping of bills, and were manifest in their third reading. In the final votes, however, party as expressive of similar regional interests in the nation, not seldom triumphed; but (as has been noted and as the maps show) where major sectional interests were involved, these parties, based on regions, yielded to sectional voting. This was a phenomenon by no means peculiar to this period.

Whether proclaiming a sectional or a national philosophy (says Turner) the leaders, in effect, were thinking in terms of their own section. Jackson expressed the attitudes of the West, Calhoun voiced the interests of the Southeast, and Webster, the so-called apostle of nationalism, had his philosophy "deeply shaped by New England sectional interests. His conception of the nation was adjusted to the economic needs of his New England supporters." "Clay's compromises and espousal of important issues owed their special form not only to his personal genius and his influence upon his party in various sections, but bore an impress from the social and economic ideas of the Ohio Valley." Like comments, says Turner, can be made upon the other leaders including Benton, J. Q. Adams, W. H. Seward, Stephen A. Douglas, Buchanan, Polk, and others.

In *The United States 1830-1850* Turner presents this sectional philosophy in plain unequivocating terms, and for that reason alone the work would deserve careful consideration. In addition, while it is unfinished and in obvious need of much revision, it is an important contribution to the historical literature not only of the country as a whole but of the individual regions. The author devotes a chapter each to New England, the Middle States, the South Atlantic States, the South Central States, the North Central States, and Texas and the Far West. His method of approach in each region is similar. He analyzes the physical characteristics of the region, its soil, climate, rivers; the origin and distribution of its population; the educational and religious trends, cultural characteristics and social attitudes, newspapers and literature. That is, he attempts to present as full and complex a picture of the people as possible. His execution has not been as successful as his conception of the plan. His treatment of New England leaves much to be desired. Many elements of the picture which James Truslow Adams presented in the third volume of his history of New England are missing. As a whole the chapter seems uncritical and too filled with platitudes and compliments (due perhaps to the fact that this and other chapters were delivered as lectures while Turner was at Cambridge, from 1918 to 1924). The chapter on the Middle Atlantic States suffers from lack of revision and from over-amiability while lecturing to an Eastern audience. The chapter on the South Atlantic is stereotyped and it is doubtful whether Turner would have ever given his consent to its publication in this form, for he was studying Calhoun and this region at the time of his death. The chapters on the South Central States and the North Central States are splendid, though the South Central States is considerably inferior to his masterly treatment of the North Central States where he was really at home. The chapter on Texas and the Far West is hardly more than a sketch. That portion of the book (about two-fifths) devoted to the political history of the period –"the interaction of sections and regions" – is uneven, inasmuch as it is based upon his regional surveys just mentioned. To sum up: The sectional interpretation of American History has been clearly and convincingly stated, but the history and interpretation of the individual sections – outside of the chapters on the North and South Central States (which after all were Turner's own special province) – have hardly been more than a superficial survey.

FRANK L. OWSLEY

Humanism and Religion *

THE author of this monograph, which comes to us as the twelfth of the series *Essays in Order*, takes issue with the prevalent tendency to consider "humanism", in some form, as a substitute for religion. Specifically, Father Vann professes to discuss Mr. Aldous Huxley's ideal, which he indicates in the exposition of Huxley's life-worship theory. Father Vann's purpose is to show that Huxley's ideal of perfected humanity is amply provided for in Roman Catholicism and especially in Thomism.

The essay begins with an effort to clarify the notion of humanism. Our author tells us that Greek humanism was built upon a philosophical foundation, that Renaissance humanism rejected the philosophy of its day and was sometimes really religious and some-

* ON BEING HUMAN: St. Thomas and Mr. Aldous Huxley *by Gerald Vann* (SHEED & WARD. 110 pp. $1.00).

times frankly pagan, and that "today we seem to have a humanism which sets out to be itself a religion and to answer every aspiration, to fulfill every requirement, for the completeness of man". Making a rapid survey of these three manifestations of the humanist spirit and referring briefly to the late Irving Babbitt, he arrives at this description of humanism:

> Humanism therefore would seem to be compounded of these several notions: the love of beauty in all its manifestations, the completion of the personality in all its powers, the symmetry or coherence in which that completion is unified, the enthronement of humanity over the earth.

In this eclectic definition the reader will vainly seek definite indication of the philosophical outlook peculiar to Irving Babbitt. What Father Vann seems to set before himself for discussion is not Babbitt's humanism but rather that modern sophistry which the Harvard thinker persistently combated and which, in calling itself humanism, borrows a name which is not rightfully its own.

Asking himself whether those four evaluations of the humanist spirit are compatible with the teachings of religion, our author gives an answer that lacks nothing in definiteness:

> Thomism at any rate holds that these things are compatible; it holds indeed that the most complete humanism, the humanism which attains its own ideals most perfectly, is the humanism of the Catholic Church; that the values it asserts are her values also and that its tenets cannot be slighted without slighting her own.

Pointing out that Aquinas views man "as revelation has shown him to be, called by God's mercy to the fulfillment not only of his natural potentialities but of his obediential potentialities also in the way of grace", he proceeds to show that there is nothing equivocal in St. Thomas's assertion of the beauty of created things, in his uncompromising departure from the Platonic and Manichaean attitude towards the body, in his idea of human perfection and the completeness of the personality.

Taking his stand on the supernatural basis of the Roman Catholic faith Father Vann does very well, on the whole, in the elaboration and proof of his thesis. He presents a picture of Aquinas as a humanist of the first order, a thinker who "freed his philosophy from the danger of that pseudo-mysticism which despises creatures and treats them as mere utilities", a revolutionary who infused into the humanist ideals a new vigour "by setting them in the horizon of the supernatural". One point of his argument, however, is definitely weak, namely that wherein he discusses the humanist principle of the centrality of man. To the untheological reader a long quotation from the *Summa* proving that "there is an anthropocentricity in the doctrine of St. Thomas which loses nothing by its dependence on the relation of man to God" would undoubtedly make a stronger appeal if it were paraphrased for the modern mind.

Quite late in the essay Mr. Aldous Huxley comes on the scene. Mentioned casually three or four times in the main exposition, he is more fully discussed in an appendix. Father Vann takes him to task for his notions about Christian asceticism. Mr. Huxley claims that the Christian ascetic restrained his passions because he believed that by so doing he was pleasing his God. Father Vann rejects this as a negative view of asceticism. He explains that Christian mortification is not a mutilation or a negative discipline or a retrenchment; it is rather an evolution, he says, a positive part of the process of developing the personality.

For American readers at least, the book would have had a greater appeal if the author had chosen for his criticism, not the philosophy of Mr. Aldous Huxley, but the teachings of the late Irving Babbitt. It is not too much to say that the Harvard thinker opposed what Father Vann opposes and in much the same spirit. But he opposed it from another angle. Where Father Vann attacks the human problem from the angle of the Christian synthesis, Irving Babbitt took up a very different position. As he stated, he himself had no quarrel with those who assume the traditionalist attitude; but at the same time he professed his utter inability to agree with those who deny an independent validity to humanism and who urge that it must be *ancilla theologiae* or at least *religionis*.

Yet this is precisely what Father Vann does. Obviously Babbitt's effort to make a secular paraphrase of supernaturalism in non-theological terms, his preoccupation with the establishment of a system of interior ethics for those whom he calls the "many men of good will for whom dogmatic and revealed religion has become impossible", his anxiety to achieve a post-Christian synthesis, all this would of course have been quite unsatisfactory to Father Vann. But it would have provided him with a worthy thesis for a book on humanism and would have given him plenty of scope for his powers in the domain of Christian apologetic.

Standing firmly on his Thomist heritage he could have crossed swords with a thinker who welcomed tradition, not as a return to dogma, but as a completion and enrichment of present experience by that of the past.

CHAS. F. RONAYNE

A Stone of Stumbling*

AS A civilization becomes more and more complex, literature – and by this I mean literature in the sense of an elaborated art, resting on the aesthetic cooperation between writer and reader, not merely literature for the sake of self-expression, or ordinary commercial writing – literature itself tends to become more and more conscious of its limitations, limitations well expressed by Doctor Johnson when he said that "books were written in order to enable men to enjoy life, or to endure it". The idea that all the great world-literatures have had at their beginning, that the chief aim of writing was to represent everything in the known human world along with its prototypes in the unknown supernatural world, an idea represented by Homer, Virgil, or Dante, or, to some extent, by Shakespeare, gradually is abandoned, and in its place comes a self-conscious attempt to restate human emotion for emotion's sake, or to describe life for the sake of the description. Thus literature in its last phases necessarily always becomes either romantic or naturalistic, and this was just as true of the late Greek or Roman civilizations as it is of the world of today. The difference between such a writer as W. B. Yeats, for example, and some of the anonymous bards of ancient pagan Ireland is that where the former poets were referring to matter within the range of common knowledge or belief, the modern poet is re-using the material of ancient myth to produce a consciously induced state of mind that is remote from our daily concerns, that is elaborately controlled by intellectual devices of stylization, that is intended to produce the effect of a self-imposed "vision". In short, where the anonymous old singer used words because they evoked in his hearers an instant recognition of certain generally held beliefs, the modern writer consciously uses them as imaginative counters to induce, as Coleridge said, "a willing suspension of disbelief", and therefore has at the same time to be less general and more exact in their use, as well as more aware of the purposes for which he is using them.

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* LECTURES IN AMERICA *by Gertrude Stein* (RANDOM HOUSE. 246 pp. $2.50).

It follows, therefore, that modern literature is at once more complex and less easy to grasp in its essence than literature of the remote past; and this fact rests at the base of much recent criticism that has been made of modern literature, in the name of a revised classicism. Whether the critics who have condemned all modern romanticism along with all modern naturalism in favour of a classic ideal, have ever paused to reflect that after all, the modern writer has little if any choice, in the present state of politics, ethics, economics, religion, and social life, than to be either naturalistic or romantic, is not for me to say. But one thing is certain: none of these critics has even attempted to deal with such a writer as Miss Gertrude Stein. For here is a modern writer who alike refuses to be classified as either naturalistic or romantic, and who yet insists that what she is doing is an inevitable extension and development of English literature transposed from its nineteenth-century setting in the British Isles to a new set of conditions which are essentially not British, but American. Moreover, this writer has insisted, for more than twenty years, and still insists, that what she is doing is not only clear and intelligible, but can be explained in simple terms to a modern audience.

The present volume, therefore, consisting of Miss Stein's lectures delivered during her recent triumphal progress of America, should be welcomed by critics of all parties; if it is not, the fault is either because these critics have come to the conclusion that Miss Stein does not know what she is talking about, or that they are sceptical whether what she is talking about bears any real relation to the problems that beset the modern writer in the present day. For my part, I frankly accept the latter point of view. Miss Stein knows perfectly well what she is talking about. But what she is talking about has nothing whatever to do with modern literature or indeed with anything beyond literature for the nursery. She has oversimplified her problem without clarifying it. In distinction to Yeats or Joyce or Pound or any representative modern, she is clear as to what she likes and dislikes and why she likes or dislikes it. But it is a clarity achieved by ignoring the necessary relationship between writer and audience, one which emerges not out of scepticism and hesitation, but out of plain blunt straightforward naïve stupidity, a stupidity which may perhaps account for her popularity at this moment with many other stupid people in the United States.

If it be argued that this criticism is unfair to Miss Stein, I can only hereby recommend the reader of this review to look at some of this remarkable woman's writing itself. I pass over the extraordinary account, given in the first pages of this volume, and headed "What Is English Literature?", of how English literature began in the accurate description of the "island daily life", went on to the Elizabethan's preoccupation with new words, became confused under Milton, cleared up again in the eighteenth century, when again the "island daily life" apparently became its subject, and then degenerated in the nineteenth century, when apparently the business of "owning everything outside", and having to explain the inside "island daily living" to the outside world led the English to concentrate on phrase-making and to a transference of emotion from sentences to paragraphs. I pass over Miss Stein's favourite idea that the paragraph is emotional, while the sentence is not. I pass over the theory that the essence of American literature is precisely its lack of connection with daily living at all: "As it has to be, because in its choosing it has to be that it has not to be, it has to be without any connection with that from which it is choosing."

I pass over all this to concentrate on the next-to-the-last lecture, here called, appropriately enough, "Portraits and Repetition". To me, the following passages culled from it contain the essence of Miss Stein's thought (I have adhered to her own punctuation):

> The difference between thinking clearly and confusion is the same difference that there is between repetition and insistence. A great many think that they know repetition

when they see or hear it but do they. A great many think that they know confusion when they know or see it but do they. A thing that seems very clear, seems very clear but is it. A thing that seems to be exactly the same thing may seem to be a repetition but is it.

As I say the American thing is the vitality of movement, so that there need be nothing against which the movement shows as movement. And if this vitality is lively enough is there in that clarity any confusion is there in that clarity any repetition. I myself do not think so. But I am inclined to believe that there is really no difference between clarity and confusion, just think of any life that is alive, is there really any difference between clarity and confusion. Now I am quite certain that there is really if anything is alive no difference between clarity and confusion. When I first began writing portraits of any one I was not so sure, not so certain of this thing that there is no difference between clarity and confusion. I was however almost certain then when I began writing portraits that if anything is alive there is no such thing as repetition.

I remember very well what happened. As I say I had the habit of conceiving myself as completely talking and listening, listening was talking and talking was listening and in so doing I conceived what I at that time called the rhythm of anybody's personality. . . . Listening and talking did not presuppose resemblance, and as they do not presuppose resemblance, they do not necessitate remembering. . . . As I say as I felt the existence of anybody later as I felt the existence of anybody or anything, there was then the listening and talking which I was doing which anybody was doing and there were the little things that made of anyone some one resembling some one. Anyone does of course by any little thing by any little way by any little expression, anyone does of course resemble some one, and anyone can notice this thing notice this resemblance and in so doing they have to remember some one and this is a different thing from listening and talking. In other words the making of a portrait of anyone is as they are existing and as they are existing has nothing to do with resembling anyone or anything.

In other words, no one has to remember anything about *Tender Buttons*, *Geography and Plays*, *Lucy Church Amiably*, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, *The Making of Americans*, or others of Miss Stein's immortal works, in order to admire and worship and know the "rhythm of the personality" of Miss Stein. "There is no difference between clarity and confusion." If this is where the modern movement has got us to, then the sooner we stop being modern, the better. For here we have it that it is not the stone which the builders rejected, but the other stone they forgot about ("listening and talking did not presuppose resemblance, and as they do not presuppose resemblance, they do not necessitate remembering") and which they later stumbled upon by accident, which has become the headstone of the corner. Whether one is to use Miss Stein's prose as something to sing in one's morning bath, or to repeat (*sotto voce*) while doing one's daily dozen, whether one can employ it for the killing of bores, or for the remorseless unhinging of one's own brain, I cannot say. But there is no doubt it is here — and Miss Stein will continue to write it, and Random House continue to publish it, so long as a nose is a nose is a nose.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER